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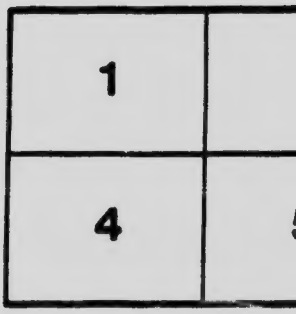

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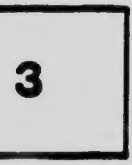

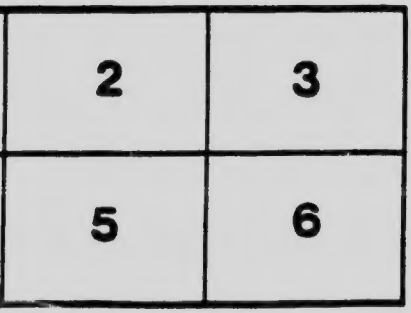

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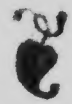

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BOOK I

THE EXODUS

I

From a cork bench on the flat roof of the cloister, the monk Antonio gazed over dim orange-groves and vineyards towards the quiet Atlantic. For many a day no wind had vexed the waters, and the ocean swell, as it searched the creeks and caves, hummed no loudlier than a bee mining deeply in the bells of flowers. Overhead thousands of stars burned mildly. The May night's soft airs were rich with scents of lemon-blossom and honeysuckle: and, like a perfume from a great hidden lily, peace filled earth and heaven.

Peace. It was the watchword of Antonio's Order. *Pax* was chiselled boldly in the old stone lintel over each choir-monk's door; and, for the sake of the lay-brethren whose Latin was less fluent than their Portuguese, *Paz* had been painted between each pair of windows on the kitchen walls. On every one of the monastery's books, both in the library and in the choir, *Pax* was stamped in dull gold; and from the lips of St. Benedict's sons as they met in cloister or garden the salutation was ever going forth: Peace be with thee.

Peace. Within Antonio's breast as well as without there reigned on this summer night a peace which passed understanding. Hardly fifteen hours before, the apostolic hands of a saintly bishop had raised the young monk to the awful dignity of the priesthood, and had

given him power to offer sacrifice for the dead and for the living.

With eyes at rest upon the dreaming sea the young Antonio recalled some of the hours he had spent sitting upon this same cork bench. All of them had not been hours of peace. Antonio remembered March nights of storm, when mountainous waves uplifted white crests in the cold shine of a racing moon. He remembered August dusks, when the thunder pounded and boomed like great guns, or like enormous breakers on a sandy shore, while the lightning unsheathed its blinding blade, bright and jagged as a scimitar. He remembered December gales, with the pine-trees cowering and creaking before the blast and January floods raging down the mountain. But, most vividly of all, Antonio recalled his hours of inward strife and tempest. He remembered that long night's vigil when he wrestled and prayed against a sudden temptation to renounce the religious life and to go back to the warm, sweet world. And he remembered those many, many hours of less sultry, more nipping and stinging tempest when all the arguments against religion in general, and against monasticism in particular, went on bursting like hailstones about his head. Thrice during his noviciate and once more on the very eve of his full profession a tornado of doubt had well-nigh swung him off his feet and hurled him back into the world. But on this May night, within him and without, there was peace.

Peace. Better still, there was peace at last in Antonio's beloved fatherland, in beautiful Portugal. For more than five-and-twenty years the garden of the West had lain under the blight of war. At the bidding of Wellington had not the peasantry laid waste their fields,

so that there should be neither a blade of grass nor a cob of maize for Napoleon's horses and men? And after Napoleon was flung back had not the ancient kingdom sunk to be a mere colony of Brazil, with Englishmen lording it amid the ruins? Worse still, had not the fratricidal strife of the Absolutists and the Constitutionalists soaked Portugal's hill-sides with her best blood? But now the civil war was ended. Napier, the amazing Englishman, had done his work, and Dom Miguel's cause was lost. At Evora Monte, with the coming of May, the faithful remnant of sixteen thousand Miguelistas had broken their swords across their knees and dashed their muskets to pieces against the stones at the news of their betrayal by a selfish and ungrateful master.

During the long siege of Oporto the echoes of the bugles had often resounded in Antonio's cell, challenging him to imitate many a monk of bygone ages and to exchange the cowl for the helmet. This was one of the most frequent shapes in which his doubts assailed him. He was young, he was ardent, he loved his country; and sometimes a flush of shame would burn his cheek as he heard of some desperate sortie from the beleaguered city. To be praying in a cloister at such a time was a good work: but, so long as the battles were actually raging, was it not a work for women, like preparing lint? Once, indeed, he went so far as to approach the abbot for leave to interrupt his monastic life while he struck a good blow for Portugal: but the abbot confounded him by demanding sadly on which side Antonio felt it his duty to fight. To the old man's question the young one could give no clear answer. His political sympathies were with sterling liberalism: but he had

read enough history and seen enough of the world to know that those who preach most of liberty often tolerate others' liberty least, and that both the constitutionalism of Dom Pedro and the absolutism of Dom Miguel were mere passwords of opportunists rather than sincere utterances of convictions and principles. In response to his silence and confusion the abbot charged him, under obedience, to dismiss the idea of soldiering from his mind: but whenever tidings of fresh carnage on the banks of the Douro reached the monastery Antonio's heart bled anew. That Portuguese should have helped to slay the thousands of Frenchmen whom Masséna had flung at the ridges of Bussaco was a thing for which Masséna's master was alone to blame: but the shooting down of Portuguese by Portuguese was a different thing. And so it was with a brimming heart that Antonio he sat on his cork bench under the mild stars, thank God for peace at last in Portugal.

Peace. Best of all, peace seemed to have begun even for the Church and for her religious Orders. It was true that the victorious Liberals had decreed the expected confiscation of the military Orders' rich possessions: but, instead of heeding the firebrands from France and suppressing the religious Orders altogether, the new Government had contented itself with closing the smaller houses and distributing their old inmates among the larger monasteries. Again, it was true that the State was seeking to impose vexations upon the Church: but it seemed probable that patience and charity and prudence on the Church's part would soon make the crooked straight, and that the Portuguese family would once more dwell in harmony and peace.

Peace. From the peace of the sea Antonio's eyes wandered at last to the peace of the earth. Roving over wood and meadow and stream, his gaze came to rest at last in a little clearing between the ending of the orange-groves and the beginning of the vineyards. This was the monks' cemetery. It was three hundred years old, and the bones of nearly all the men who had lived and breathed and walked in the cloister under his feet lay beneath its [illegible] turf and flowers. In the midst of the clearing [illegible] and slender cross glimmered pale through the

There was not a trace [illegible] morbidity in his mood; yet Antonio beheld God's [illegible] with more of longing than of shrinking. On so soft [illegible] gracious a night even a pagan would have found [illegible] something alluring in the thought of death. After the day's glare the dimness was like a veil for tired eyes, and the scented air was like caressing arms, wooing one to everlasting rest. Antonio was no pagan and no voluptuary. He wanted [illegible]e strenuously for God, according to the Holy Rule: but it was good to feel that, whenever the body should be worn and weary [illegible] unto death, there would be this plot [illegible] hallowed earth for its repose. With his eyes upon the pale cross Antonio looked through it into his future. He [illegible] tured himself living his life, as the hundreds of dead men in the cemetery had lived theirs, in the cell, in the chapel, and in the cloister, studying the divine mysteries, ever advancing towards perfection, praying for those who would not pray for themselves, rendering to God some of the praise and worship whereof the careless deprive Him, and striving, as it were, to redress the balance of the world. He saw himself giving his keen mind, his eager

spirit, his young strength, his whole manhood to the divine office, so that the praising of God should not all be left to the weak, the simple, the aged, and to the fearful souls in the shadow of death. He knew full well that the world did not understand such a sacrifice, and that the mass of men were so entirely blind to the monastic ideal that they would look on him either as a cowardly shirker of life's duties or as a fanatical abstainer from its joys. But he had long ago learned to despise the judgments of the world. His sacrifice was acceptable to his Lord and it was the groundwork of his spirit's peace. It was as though Antonio heard from the midst of the stars His voice saying, *Pacem relinquo vobis, pacem meam do vobis: non quomodo mundus dat, ego do vobis*—'Peace, I leave with you, My peace I give to you: not as the world giveth give I to you.'

Humility made haste to stifle the beginnings of pride. This sacrifice of his—what was it, after all? What great merit was there in yielding back to God his body, soul, and spirit? They were God's own, and at any moment He could revoke them. Antonio brought his mind back firmly to the stupendous happening of the morning, and to the scene in the chapel when the bishop laid hands upon his head. He, Antonio, with all his unworthiness, was a priest at last, and very soon he would be called upon to offer that ineffable Sacrifice, compared with which his own was nothing worth. He, Antonio, would soon stand before the altar, offering up the Lord and Maker of all these stars and seas and mountains, the very God of very God, for the dead and for the living.

For the dead. Still gazing at the pale cross, he vowed

to remember in his first Mass the faithful departed whose dust lay beneath its pitiful arms. And for the living. A league away two lights still beamed from the windows of a farm-house, and, far out at sea, the mast-head lamp on a fisherman's boat twinkled like another star. They reminded him of the toiling men and women whose cheerful labour is the *Te Deum* most beloved of heaven, and he vowed more heartily still that he would always exercise his priesthood in spiritual communion with these obscure saints. And, from them, his charity widened to all Portugal. Portugal had reeled long enough under the shocks of war, even as her cliffs had seemed to reel and shudder under the enormous assault and battery of wintry storms: and Antonio yearned over her, almost as if he already held the chalice in his hand, praying with his whole heart that this May night, with the soft waters nestling to Portugal's side and crooning a lullaby, might be an earnest of his country's abiding peace.

He rose from the bench and sought the stone stairway. Less than a mile from the monastery gate two lanterns were bobbing violently up and down on the road, as if they were being carried by galloping horsemen. Antonio strained his ears, and made out the clattering of many hoofs and a faint clink of steel.

II

'Go down quickly and meet them at the gate,' said the Prior to Antonio as soon as the young monk had finished his rapid story. 'If they are Miguelistas tell them they cannot be harboured here. Say the war is over and we have suffered enough.'

'And what if they are Liberals?'

'If they are Liberals——' the Prior began. But he stopped short, with trouble in his face. 'If they are Liberals,' he repeated slowly, 'they are coming here for no good.'

'There is not a moment to lose,' said Antonio.

As he spoke the door of the nearest cell opened and a third monk appeared. He was older than Antonio—perhaps forty years of age. His fine features were pain-worn, and, in spite of the softness of the night, he was drawing his black habit closely round his slender body.

'Here is Father Sebastian,' cried the Prior. 'He will go with you. Father Sebastian, there is fresh trouble. Antonio has heard soldiers. Meet them at the gate. Tell them of the Abbot's illness. Take them to the guest-house. Say I will speak to them there. Run!'

Antonio gathered up his habit and sped off like a hare. But at the entrance of an avenue flanked by giant camellias he halted, suddenly remorseful. Sebastian overtook him.

'Don't wait for me. Run on,' he panted.

Antonio plunged into the dark tunnel. Before he had run half its length the cracked bell at the monastery gate broke into an insolent din. Where the camellias ended he slackened pace and allowed his habit to fall once more in dignified amplitude to his feet. Meanwhile somebody was noisily clanking the scabbard of a sword against the iron bars of the gate. He drew nearer and made out a throng of cloaked men on little white horses.

"We demand entrance," piped a weak voice, as a trooper flashed the light of a lantern through the bars into Antonio's face.

'If you are Miguelistas,' returned Antonio, 'I must refuse.'

'Miguelistas?' squeaked the weak voice. 'Miguelistas! If we were Miguelistas you would make us welcome, like the traitors you are. Miguelistas! We are no Miguelistas. Open in the name of the Queen.'

'Why?' asked Father Sebastian quietly, as he took his place at Antonio's side.

The beam of the lantern searched Father Sebastian's face also. Then the weak voice began again. But it was immediately drowned by the strong and hearty tones of an officer, who plucked the lantern out of the soldier's hand and held it close to his own face so that he could be seen while he was speaking.

'Your Reverences,' he said, 'we ask pardon. But we must enter. We are simply doing our duty. Your Reverences have not heard of the decrees.'

'Your Excellency is wrong,' answered Father Sebastian. 'We have studied them all. The military orders are suppressed; but ours is not a military order. The

smaller monasteries are to be closed; but this is not one of the smaller monasteries. What have the decrees to do with us?'

'Everything,' retorted the weak voice in triumph. The officer turned in his saddle and held the lantern up so as to exhibit a squat, blonde, elderly man, clinging precariously to a thick-legged horse. 'Yes, everything. The new decree is only forty-eight hours old. All the orders are suppressed. All of them, big and little. All of them, in all Portugal. All of them, bag and baggage, root and branch, lock, stock and barrel. It was high time. Here is the decree in my hand. Open the gates before we smash them down.'

'If this is true,' flung back Antonio in an outburst of indignation, 'the Government has broken its word. But I don't believe it. Your decree is a forgery. You have come here to cheat and rob us. You have come——'

'Be silent, Father Antonio,' said Father Sebastian. 'Help me to draw the bolt. Leave this affair to me.'

The principal gate had not been opened since the days when Wellington and his staff had made the monastery their headquarters: but the bolt gave way at last. The gates turned upon their rusty hinges with a piercing sound which cut through the darkness like a wail. One might almost have believed that the genius of the place was crying to heaven for help. Men and horses began pressing through the gate, but Father Sebastian stood in their way.

'Senhor Captain,' he said, 'our Prior is at your Excellency's service. But our Abbot is lying sick. He is nearly eighty years old. This path leads to our guest-house. The Prior begs that he may attend you there. It is not far. We will show your Excellency the way.'

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The captain hesitated. Even the feeble light of the lanterns was enough to show that he did not relish his task. But before he could speak the squat, blonde man piped out:

'Most decidedly and emphatically not. The sick and the aged shall have every consideration: but there are no longer people here entitled to call themselves Priors and Abbots. Senhor Captain, our duty is clear. Let us get on.'

'Your Reverence,' said the captain to Father Sebastian. 'I am sorry. But what can I do? My instructions are to support the Senhor Visconde in taking possession of the monastery. The Prior shall see the decree. I will do my best not to distress the reverend Abbot. But I cannot follow you to the guest-house.'

He leapt down from his horse, and led it behind Antonio and Sebastian into the avenue of camellias. The squat civilian followed, without dismounting, and about thirty troopers brought up the rear. The two monks walked with bowed heads, Sebastian praying, Antonio burning. No one spoke: but the rattle of hoofs and weapons was so loud that the Prior guessed the failure of his ambassadors almost as soon as the last soldier had crossed the sill of the gate.

Before the noisy procession clattered into the paved space in front of the monastery, the eighteen choir-monks, with the Prior at their head and the lay brethren behind, were already assembled under the stone vault of the vestibule. As every one of them had issued from his cell carrying a lamp or a candle they seemed to be assembled for some solemn religious function, such as a mass of requiem. Most of the monks were old men; for the long years of foreign invasions and civil wars had

not been fertile in religious vocations. To more than half of them the monastery had been their only home for forty years or more. Hardly ten words had been exchanged among them as to the meaning of the Prior's summons; yet one and all of them divined their fate. Two or three of the oldest and weakest huddled against their younger and stronger brethren, with the look of hunted animals who hear the dogs beginning to nose and work at the mouths of their burrows.

Expressing his failure by a sad gesture, Father Sebastian bowed to the Prior and passed in to join the crowd in the vestibule, with Antonio in his wake. The captain followed on their heels, uncovering respectfully as the Prior advanced to meet him. There was a silence: but it was quickly ended by a wheezy cry from without:

'Wait for me! This is my business. Wait for me, I say.'

'We are waiting for the Senhor Visconde,' rapped back the captain with a touch of scorn.

'Then bring me a stool,' the Viscount demanded. 'Help me down. Bring me a stool or a chair. Here, Ferreira, you fat dog, help me down.'

The fat dog Ferreira backed up and, with his arms clasped round the burly trooper's neck, the Viscount was rescued from the perils of the thick-legged horse. Either from stupidity or from malice, Ferreira did not set him down upon his feet but carried him up the monastery steps as sailors carry land-lubbers ashore through the surf. When he finally landed on the vestibule floor the Viscount might have recovered his dignity had not another trooper, safely hidden in the outer darkness, uttered a loud guffaw. He turned round angrily with a threat at his tongue's end: but

the weird black ranks of monks silently staring at him in the smoky light scared him into speechlessness.

'The most illustrious and most excellent Senhor Visconde will explain to your Reverence why we are here,' announced the captain dryly.

'I am at your Excellency's service,' said the Prior, stepping forward and looking the Viscount in the face.

For two whole days during his carriage-ride from Lisbon the Viscount had been jotting down a discourse on the inevitable victory of the emancipated human intellect over priestcraft and superstition. It was in the best French manner. Even during his fearsome hour on the thick-legged horse, after the roughness of the by-roads had compelled him to descend from his chariot, he had contrived to add a flourish or two to his peroration. But the steady eyes of the Prior burned up all the Viscount's fine phrases like stubble, and he could only stutter:

'You are suppressed. All convents are suppressed. This Order is suppressed. Here is the decree. I tell you, you are suppressed.'

An indescribable sound burst from the listening monks. It was compounded of the prayers of some, blent with the moans of despair or the cries of incredulity or indignation of the others. The smoky vault re-echoed it strangely. But the Prior turned upon his brethren sharply.

'We will be silent,' he said.

They were silent. A few lips moved in prayer. Many eyes flashed fire at the despoiler and more than one fist was fiercely clenched. But not a word was spoken until the Prior demanded

'Let me read the decree.'

Without waiting for an answer he took the papers out of the Viscount's clasp and perused them from beginning to end. Then he handed them back and began to think deeply. At last he raised his head and said loudly:

'Senhor Viscount; Senhor Captain; soldiers—you have come here to rob God. For years your comrades have been pouring out their blood in civil strife—and why? On the plea that Portugal must be ruled by the will of the people instead of by the will of kings. Is this the will of the people? Answer me. If Dom Pedro had told you amidst the shot and shell of Oporto that these were to be the first-fruits of his victory, I say that Donna Maria would never have reached her throne. You have been deceived. You were fighting for Absolutists after all. It is not Liberalism to trample on every liberty save your own.'

'This is stark treason,' sputtered the Viscount.

'It is stark truth,' rejoined the Prior. 'But I will return to our business. Senhores, give me leave to prepare him for your visit, and I will lead you to the cell of our Abbot. Father Isidoro, go and make all ready.'

'The Abbot?' echoed the captain, astonished. And the Viscount, turning very red as Father Isidoro disappeared, gasped out:

'The Abbot? No. Certainly not. Decidedly not. The Abbot is very old and very ill. Your young men have told me so. It is unnecessary. Decidedly not. We will treat the sick and the aged with more humanity.'

'These papers,' said the Prior curtly, tapping the roll in the Viscount's hand, 'are addressed to the Abbot.

They are his death-warrant; and your Excellency shall not shirk executing it.'

'It is inhumanity!' the Viscount cried.

'Not on our part,' answered the Prior. 'We are his children, and we know our Abbot. He shall not be carried away in a litter to-morrow to die among strangers. Kill him here. Kill him now. Our beloved father would have it so. Senhores, excuse me. In five minutes I will return.'

Before the Prior's sandals had ceased to resound on the cloister flags twenty tongues were loosened. The ranks of monks broke up into little groups, some dismayed, others defiant. As for the Viscount he turned upon the captain wrathfully.

'We are fools to allow it,' he cried. 'What have we to do with dying old men? It's a trick to work on our feelings. They mean to turn the soldiers against us. Yes, we're fools. I say we're a pair of fools.'

'Perhaps your Excellency will speak for himself,' grunted the captain, whose disgust for his work was growing as rapidly as his contempt for the civilian.

'Aren't we masters here?' the Viscount demanded. 'We will parley with no Abbots. Aren't we in possession?'

'I think not,' said the captain. 'I'm no lawyer: but the Prior says these papers are addressed first and foremost to the Abbot.'

A confused murmuring had been growing louder and louder among the troopers who crowded the doorway. All of a sudden it rose to an uproar, and two struggling men lurched into the light, locked in a fierce embrace. The captain sprang upon them as if they had been two

fighting terriers, cuffing them roundly about the ears till they fell apart.

'What is this?' he thundered.

'It's about religion,' sang out the fat Ferreira.

The two men bent their shoulders and eyed one another with tigerish eyes as they prepared for a second spring: but their comrades rushed upon them and held them apart.

'Miguelite hunchback!' snarled the one.

'Liberal nigger!' hissed the other.

'Hold your tongues!' roared the captain, firing a volley of oaths.

They held their tongues. But the Viscount did not hold his. 'Captain,' he piped out, 'this is mutiny, rank mutiny. Nigger, Liberal nigger, indeed! Surely you will do your duty. This man is a Miguelista. He is a spy and a traitor. He must be shot.'

'Let your Excellency mind his business with the Abbot and I'll mind mine with my men,' retorted the officer, thoroughly roused. And, ignoring the Viscount's sputterings, he strode up to the soldier who had cried 'Liberal nigger' and demanded:

'José, you were wounded in Oporto?'

'Three times,' said José sullenly. There was a sabre-wound in his cheek and two fingers were gone from his left hand. As he spoke he laid his thumb and two fingers upon some third wound hidden by his threadbare coat.

'And cholera? You had cholera?'

'Yes, Senhor Captain. They gave me up for dead. A monk saved my life. And by all the saints of God,' he cried, raising his voice to a shout, 'I'll be shot before I do such dirty work as this.'

The Viscount threw out two stumpy arms wide. But the captain was too cunning for him.

'And sunstroke?' he put in quickly. 'I remember. Sunstroke. What do you mean, enlisting again when you know you ought to be in a mad-house? Where do you live?'

'At Pedrinha das Areias.'

'Near Oliveira?'

'It is fourteen leagues from here.'

'Then take yourself off.'

'Senhor Captain——'

'Take yourself off before you are shot or hanged. Ferreira, Da Silva, take his weapons. He can keep his horse because it's his own.'

The scarred peasant flushed and would have answered. But his boor's personality was top-heavy and lopsided, and he went down like a skittle before the captain's next ball.

'Go home this instant!' bellowed the captain. And, helped by the friendly hustling of his wiser comrades, José soon found himself hoisted on his old horse and ambling under the camellias towards his mother's roof-tree.

Meanwhile a lay-brother had returned from the Abbot's cell. In a loud voice and with a ceremonious air he said:

'The most excellent and most reverend Lord Abbot is at the service of your Excellencies.'

III

THE cell of the Abbot was a room about twenty feet square. Its furniture consisted of a small painted table, two stools, two straight-backed chairs, a portrait of Saint Benedict, a very large crucifix of ebony and ivory, an old oak desk covered with papers, and a narrow bed.

To his surprise and relief the Viscount found the bed empty and the Abbot throned upon one of the high-backed chairs. But his fears returned when a lay-brother set eight candles, in a bronze candelabrum, upon the painted table. By their light he saw a face which seemed to gaze on him from beyond the grave. To the old man's right and left stood the Prior and Father Isidoro, supporting him. They had vested the Abbot in a cope stiff with gold embroidery, and they had placed his mitre on his head and his crozier in his hand.

The captain paused in the doorway, embarrassed. Then he ducked his head and crooked his knee in awkward obeisance and blurted out, 'Your Reverence, here is the Senhor Visconde.'

'To what noble Visconde am I speaking?' asked the Abbot.

The civilian recovered himself and answered proudly:

'Your Excellency is speaking to the Visconde de Ponte Quebrada.'

'I thought I knew all the titulars of Portugal,' the

Abbot returned in his small, clear tones, 'but I do not know the Viscondes of Ponte Quebrada.'

The Visconde was nettled, but he held his chin high and retorted:

"It is a new creation. I am the first Visconde. I am proud to say I have won the title by my own merits, and not merely because I am my father's son.'

'Your Excellency has commanded in action?' the Abbot asked. 'No doubt Ponte Quebrada was the scene of a battle—a victory?'

'Your most reverend Lordship is wrong,' interrupted the captain. 'The illustrious Visconde has served her Majesty in other ways. To hire the English transports for Belle Isle and the Açores meant money. To pay the French and Belgian and English officers and men at Oporto meant more money. The English Admiral Napier, who destroyed the Miguelista fleet, required still more money. Money was hard to find: but the noble Visconde has powerful friends in London. He knows the Senhor Rothschild, that clever man who kept back from the English the news of Waterloo while he made his own fortune in the Funds. The Visconde helped to find the money.'

'At what rate of interest?' asked the Abbot quietly. And when the officer only shrugged his shoulders he added, 'Is the noble Visconde a born Portuguese?'

The Viscount boiled over with rage. 'I have not come here to be cross-examined and insulted,' he cried, 'I am here to execute a decree of the Government. This monastery is suppressed.'

'I am told the Government has sent a strong force of soldiers,' the Abbot answered. 'Why? Because the Government fears we may tear the decree in pieces.

I have not questioned your Excellency out of idle curiosity. I am the father of this family; I am responsible for their little patrimony; and when I go to stand, as go I so soon must, before my Lord, I must not go as an unfaithful steward.'

'The monastery is suppressed,' the Viscount repeated.

'The question for me,' continued the Abbot, ignoring him, 'is whether I can obey this decree or not. We have always rendered unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; but we cannot render unto Cæsar the things that are God's.'

'The monastery is suppressed. It belongs to the Portuguese people,' piped the Viscount.

This time the Abbot did not ignore him. 'Portuguese?' he echoed. 'All these fathers and brethren are Portuguese. The Senhor Captain is a Portuguese. The humblest of these soldiers is a Portuguese. Apparently we are all Portuguese save your Excellency. The Portuguese people! Yes. Here it is, in the decree. From this date the possessions of the religious orders are declared to be the possessions of the Portuguese people. Senhores, listen. In time of need we have never failed to share our last crust and our last coin with the Portuguese people. We are Portuguese as well as monks. When the French were in the land we cheerfully gave up all we had to drive them out. More. There are three fathers standing here who hide soldiers' scars under their habits, and there is one who carried despatches under a hotter fire than any of your Worships have even seen.'

'This is not the point,' whined the Viscount.

'It is the only point there is. Your Excellency shall answer me plainly. If we bow to this decree, which of

"the Portuguese people" will enjoy our house and goods? Will they be sold to feed the poor and to clothe the hungry and to pay the just debts of the State?'

'I say the monastery is suppressed,' the Viscount responded uneasily. 'My duty is simply to take possession. How do I know what the Government will do with it?'

'Your Excellency knows one thing at least. He can assure the fathers and brethren that he has no secret authority, no plan, no ambition of keeping this place for himself or for his friends?'

The Viscount of Ponte Quebrada clutched the back of the unoccupied chair for support. Outside his darling business of usury he had always been a weak, foolish, poor creature, easily cowed by any strong man who stood up to him; but the Abbot's words doubly terrified him. Not only did they forbode the miscarriage of his plans; they also filled him with supernatural dread. The dying man had spoken in low and even tones, as if he and his visitors were discussing some commonplace transaction: but the unearthly face, almost immobile between the cope and the mitre, would have frightened the Viscount out of his wits if he had not averted his eyes from it. But while he could turn away his eyes, he could not close his ears; and the Abbot's final question probed the depths of the Viscount's schem...g so unexpectedly that the schemer quailed in superstitious horror. For a moment or two the cell and the black figures and the smoky lights swung round with him.

'Also our gold monstrance,' the low, even tones persisted, 'our Limoges triptych, our two chalices with

the great rubies, our Saint Jerome in the Wilderness, painted on wood by Gran Vasco, our five silver reliquaries, the seven-branched candlestick from Venice, our illuminated Conferences of the Solitaries of Cassian, and all our plate and vestments? We saved them from the French, burying them in the woods; and Father Lee was shot because he would not reveal the hiding-place. What about these things? Will they be respected? Will they be honourably preserved in our Portuguese cathedrals and parish churches? No doubt his Excellency does not know: but, I repeat, he can assure us that he will not lay a finger upon them for his own profit?'

Every face turned towards the Viscount of Ponte Quebrada. Fifty eyes seemed to be boring like fifty white-hot gimlets into his most secret thoughts. He pulled himself together for a final attempt at bullying bluster.

'I have been insulted enough!' he screamed. 'You are suppressed. That's enough. You're suppressed, and you ought to have been suppressed long ago. You are the Queen's enemies. You've given shelter to every traitor that knocked at the door.'

'This latest war, thank God, almost passed us by,' said the Prior, stepping forward. 'While it lasted we gave shelter to five combatants only. Two were Dom Miguel's, three were the Queen's. They were all wounded. If they came here wounded again we should once more take them in.'

'My questions have not been answered,' interrupted the Abbot's clear, small voice.

'And they shan't be,' retorted the Viscount, who had regained his courage. 'And, hark you all, you are

on sufferance here. Keep civil tongues in your heads and clear out quietly. We have the right to pitch you out into the road.'

'I think not,' the Abbot answered. 'The decree speaks of to-morrow noon. We shall remain here until that hour; and perhaps longer. Meanwhile your Excellency has time to answer my questions. Our own answer turns upon his.'

'I am afraid, my Lord Abbot, there is only one answer possible,' said the captain. 'By noon this house must be empty, save for the guard.'

"And if we resist?'

The captain meditated before he replied in grave tones: 'Your Reverences will not resist. Your Reverences will protest and will bow, without disgrace, to superior force. And if any injustice has been done, the Queen, or the judges in Lisbon, or the ministers, or the Parliament must be moved to put it right.'

'And in the meantime,' said the Abbot, 'what will become of this consecrated place, and of its sacred belongings? We have an inventory of every valuable thing. If we go at noon will your Excellencies sign a copy of it, to remain in our hands?'

'They are not yours,' squeaked the Viscount in greedy ire as he saw the loot slipping out of his hands. 'All the things are Portugal's.'

'Then, as a Portuguese, I will take care, Senhor Visconde, that Portugal does not lose them,' the Abbot answered.

A grunt of delight came from the soldiery thronging the cell doorway. The Abbot took advantage of it to close the interview.

'Senhores,' he said, 'we will exchange our final

answers to-morrow morning, after High Mass, at eleven o'clock. Till then these men will be ordered, no doubt, to respect our house and the life we lead in it. The guest-house is being prepared. I wish your Excellencies good-night.'

The Viscount of Ponte Quebrada framed an answer, but as he glanced at the Abbot's face the words froze on his lips and he made haste to escape from the cell, at the captain's tail. The monks remained behind, and the door was shut.

'Surely we're not going to let ourselves be ordered off to their guest-house?' the Viscount began as they regained the vestibule.

'I prefer it,' said the captain curtly. 'Hi, Ferreira, you and Pirez and Pedro Telles will come with us. Carvalho, I leave you in charge of the monastery. Place four guards at the sacristy door and two at each outlet. Understand, no monk must be allowed to lock or unlock any door, or gate, or cupboard, or to go outside: no, not even the Prior or the Abbot himself. If they want to say their prayers in the chapel, they may: but watch them yourself and see that nothing is taken or hidden. Treat them with complete respect: but if there is any sign of trouble, send for me on the instant.'

As soon as he had approved Carvalho's choice of sentries the captain strode out into the open air without another word to the Viscount. A dozen paces ahead went a lay-brother with a lantern, Ferreira and Pirez and Telles crowding behind him. A moment later the little nobleman was puffing at the captain's side. The captain quickened his pace by artful but unmistakable degrees until the nobleman could only keep up with him

by a succession of little runs. Needing all his breath for this exercise, he could not talk.

The guest-house was not much more than fifty years old. An aristocratic abbot had built it for the accommodation of his too numerous visitors, whose comings and goings had excessively disturbed the peace of the cloister. It was an oblong building of granite, standing high in a clearing. From its moss-grown terrace there was a view by daylight of the monastery's whole domain, of the plain beyond, and of the Atlantic filling all the West.

There were plentiful lights in the best rooms of the guest-house, and broad pans of charcoal burning cosily on the floors. Even for their evictors the Prior and Abbot were keeping up the best traditions of monkish hospitality. Two bottles of wine—one red, one white—stood on a table, flanked by a giant loaf, a goat's-milk cheese, and a basket of black cherries. An iron pot of soup exhaled comfortable odours from a brazier near the window.

'Is this stuff all right?' sniffed the Viscount the moment they were alone.

The captain arched his brows.

'I mean,' explained the other, 'is it safe? One has heard of such things as poisons.'

'Your Excellency is not obliged to touch it,' the captain answered. He emptied half a bottle of red wine into a coarse glass and drank it at a single draught. Then he broke off a hunk of bread and fell upon his soup. The civilian followed his example. For a Viscount he ate a little unpleasantly.

'About this affair down there,' began the captain brusquely as he swallowed his last crumb of cheese, 'what are we going to do?'

'To begin with, we're not going to be dictated to. They're suppressed. It's not for them to make terms.'

'The Abbot's questions? Does your Excellency mean to answer them?'

'Questions!' cried the Viscount in a fury; 'the Abbot's questions! The Abbot's insults, you mean.'

Weighing his words and maintaining his politeness with an effort the captain said:

'My orders are to go to almost any extremity rather than use force against these monks. And on the whole we have succeeded better than I hoped. If we permit the Abbot to save his face, he will evacuate the position to-morrow, and will fight only in Lisbon to regain it. At the same time I quite understand that your Excellency can hardly answer questions which sound like insults. But he can leave it all to me. It can do no harm to sign their inventory; and, with due permission, I will assure the Abbot that the noble Visconde de Ponte Quebrada has not the faintest idea of dealing with the monastery for his own ends. At noon they will go.'

The Viscount looked searchingly at the captain across the crumbs and rinds. The captain looked no less searchingly at the Viscount. Each saw a certain distance into the other's mind.

'Captain,' said the Viscount at last, 'as that ghastly old corpse of an Abbot was impudent enough to observe, I am not a born Portuguese. Give me leave to drop this flummery of "Excellency," and all the rest of it, so that we can talk openly for five minutes. About this inventory. Some of the things are valuable. The whole lot might be worth nearly a thousand pounds.'

'I should have thought nearly eleven hundred,' said the captain.

The Viscount pricked up his ears: but, detecting nothing ironical or suspicious in the captain's voice or expression, he continued:

"Say a round thousand. Out of that the Government must have about four hundred. What do you say to——'

He paused, studying the captain's face narrowly. Then he jerked out:

'To three hundred each?'

The captain's conscience was not clear of past pilferings from the public purse. This the Viscount knew; for he would never have dared to depend on his face-reading powers alone. Yet, in spite of the absence of witnesses, he was taking a certain risk, and he awaited the captain's answer nervously. It came without much delay:

'I draw the line somewhere,' said the captain. 'I don't rob churches. Besides,' he added in a contemptuous outburst, 'I believe in honour, even among thieves. I'm not a fool. The stuff is worth five thousand pounds if it's worth a penny.'

The Viscount fidgeted about miserably, crumbling up bread. 'Not five,' he whined. 'Say two thousand seven hundred. Or three at the outside. Now, we'll suppose——"

'Senhor Visconde de Ponte Quebrada, we will suppose nothing,' retorted the captain, getting up in disgust. 'I don't know what you are yourself: but, damn it all, I'm a Christian. Will you sign that inventory . . . or shall I? And what is your answer on your honour—if you've got any—to the Abbot?'

The Viscount climbed off his chair and struck an attitude.

"You are armed to the teeth, while I am defenceless,' he said grandly, 'but I will not brook these insults. Have a care.'

The captain laughed a scornful laugh.

'We'll see who laughs last,' squeaked the Viscount, stamping up to the soldier and shaking both his fists. 'We'll see who laughs in Lisbon. What about José? What about Liberal niggers? Who is it that protects traitors? Pah! You're a Jesuit in sheep's clothing; you're a Miguelista spy; you're a——'

The captain's long-pent rage brimmed over and burst forth like a tide of molten lava. He seized the viscount's velvet collar as if it had been the scruff of a cat and rammed him down upon the nearest chair, hissing:

'Take that back or I'll kill you.'

The Viscount sputtered.

'Then down on your knees,' said the captain: and in five seconds he had his victim grovelling on the floor. 'Take those words back, and ask my pardon, here and now, on your knees, before I wring your neck.'

'I . . . take them back. I . . . I beg your pardon,' moaned the Viscount.

He was about to rise when the captain dropped a heavy hand on his shoulder and forced him down again.

"And to-morrow you sign that inventory?'

With a very foul oath the Viscount said at length, 'I sign.'

'Very well. As for the Abbot's question you and he shall settle it between you. But mark. Don't try revenge. If anything goes wrong with me in Lisbon—with my promotion, with my career—I shan't let you

off a second time, you blackguard. Even if it's some other man's intrigue, it's your dirty neck I shall come and wring. If you want to be on the safe side you'd better see to it that I'm major next week, and colonel before next year is out. You son of a pig, get up!'

IV

When the door of his cell had fairly closed behind the captain and the Viscount, the Abbot made a sign that all should gather round him. For eight months he had not been seen in choir, and for many days disease and weakness had imprisoned him in his bed: but, as his spiritual family pressed forward, a measure of strength returned to him. Perhaps it was the excitement; perhaps it was supernatural assistance. He rose slowly to his feet and, leaning on his crozier, began:

'*Carissimi, nolite peregrinari in fervore, qui ad tentationem vobis fit, quasi novi aliquid contingat: sed communicantes Christi passionibus gaudete, ut in revelatione gloriae ejus gaudeatis exsultantes.*'

The Abbot's eye rested upon Brother Cypriano, the least lettered of the lay-monks, and, for Brother Cypriano's benefit, he sought to turn St. Peter's words into the vernacular.

'"Most beloved, do not think strange this fiery trial which comes to try you, as if some new thing were happening to you: but, sharing in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with great joy.'"

His translation did not wholly satisfy the Abbot, and he sought to mend it. '*Nolite peregrinari*,' he repeated. 'Brother Cypriano, a *peregrinus* is one who comes from a foreign land. If a *peregrinus* from China

should land in Portugal, he would find many of our most familiar customs new and strange. *Nolite peregrinari.* It is as though Saint Peter would say to us all to-night: "My beloved, men are smiting you and driving you forth from your only shelter. Why are you surprised? Do not stand like *peregrini* gaping and staring, as Greeks might gape and stare at Barbarians. This is not a new, a strange thing: it is the old way, the natural way of the world with our Lord and with His own." If He suffered, shall not we suffer? *Non est servus major domino suo*: "A servant is not greater than his Lord." Yes, Saint Peter, after all, is only echoing our divine Lord's own words. *Beati estis cum maledixerint vobis, et persecuti vos fuerint, et dixerint omne malum adversum vos mentientes, propter me: gaudete et exsultate quoniam merces vestra copiosa est in coelis: sic enim persecuti sunt prophetas qui fuerunt ante vos.* "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and shall persecute you, and shall falsely speak all that is evil against you for My sake: be glad and rejoice, for abundant is your reward in heaven; for so they persecuted the prophets which were before you."'

The aged man's voice became almost sonorous as he rolled forth the Latin words. He so pronounced the vowels that one thought of bells, some silvern, some of bronze. Most of his hearers had extinguished the lamps and candles which they still held in their hands: but here and there a flame still flickered. Unconsciously they had fallen into such groups and attitudes that the sable monks, with t' white and golden Abbot in their midst, might have stepped down from some painted and gilded altar-piece of the fourteenth century. For a brief spell the venerable Abbot continued comforting

his children, striving to subdue their worldly anger and to lift their dire trouble to the height of the Cross. He knew the whole of the New Testament by heart, in Latin, and as he had begun his exhortation with words of Saint Peter he went on quoting from the letters of that apostle only.

'*Et quis est qui vobis noceat?*' he demanded. '"Who is he that can hurt you?" *Humiliamini sub potenti manu Dei, ut vos exaltet in tempore visitationis; omnem sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis.* "Humble yourself under God's mighty hand, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation; casting upon Him all your care, because He careth for you."'

Growing fatigued at last, he sat down and became fully conscious for the first time of his mitre and crozier and cope. Praying Father Isidoro to divest him of this magnificence, he seemed to recover strength again as he faced the fathers clad simply in his habit with a gold cross upon his breast. With the laying aside of pomps his manner became more intimate and free.

'I have been preparing,' he said, 'for this blow. The characters of those men who have struck us left me little hope. Dom Pedro's advisers are taking a leaf from the book of the English King Henry the Eighth. They want money so as to carry on a spendthrift government, and they want lands and great houses so as to create a new aristocracy which will maintain them in power. Therefore the monasteries must be besmirched by false accusations and God must be robbed.'

'But, my father, we shall resist,' broke out Brother Cypriano, clenching his enormous hands.

The Abbot shook his head sadly.

'No,' he said, 'there can be only one end. We are men of peace, not of blood. In my weakness and sickness our Lord has seemed to open my eyes to the future. Saint Peter's words might be mine: *Certus quod velox est depositio tabernaculi mei secundum quod et Dominus noster Jesus Christus significavit mihi.* I am "certain that the laying down of my tabernacle is at hand, as our Lord Jesus Christ also hath signified to me." Fathers and brethren, to-morrow will see the end of this community. For more than three hundred years Saint Benedict's children have sought to live by his Holy Rule on this spot: but to-morrow ends all. We can do no more than frustrate the sacrilegious greed of this foreign Visconde and save our patrimony for Portugal.'

Taken by themselves the Abbot's words would not have stifled discussion, and even the unconditional obedience they owed him would not have held back the more militant monks from trying to defeat his will. But the unearthly light in the old man's eyes, which had so terrified the Viscount, beamed forth upon these men like a pillar of fire guiding them in God's way. Even the burly and unmystical Cypriano yielded to the spell. Accordingly no one felt that there was anything dictatorial in the Abbot's procedure when he took their assent for granted and passed quietly on to arrange the details of the community's last hours beneath its historic roofs.

After the Prior, the Cellarer, and two other monks had been consulted, it was agreed that the life of the monastery should proceed as if nothing had happened. Conformably to the Holy Rule, Matins were appointed to be sung at about two o'clock, so that Lauds could

follow at break of day. In the order of the monks' Low Masses no alteration was made: but, for the High Mass, the Abbot asked all to pray that he might be given strength to pontificate. As for the inventory, it was decided to adhere to the Abbot's demands. Finally, the tiny town of Navares, four leagues away, was chosen as the first night's shelter after the exodus. In Navares the Cellarer had a kinsman, a corn-merchant, in whose house and barns some sort of lodgings could be found.

When the Abbot was lain down at last on his hard and narrow bed, the Prior would have had the throng withdraw: but the Abbot forbade him. He wished to speak, he said, to all the fathers and brothers in turn. One by one the monks knelt down beside the bed and kissed the wasted hand with love and reverence; and to each and every one he spoke some word of affectionate encouragement or counsel, and humbly asked their prayers.

Antonio was the last of the choir-monks to come forward. As he knelt down a hush fell upon all. Amidst the general affliction they had lacked time to think of Antonio's bitter trial: but when the Abbot spoke he put the thoughts of all into words.

'Father Antonio,' he said, laying his old white hand on the young monk's curling black hair, 'may our Lady of Perpetual Succour comfort you. For the present God does not suffer you to say your first Mass. But remember Saint Ignatius of Loyola, who, of his own will, prepared himself for a year before he presumed to offer the holy sacrifice. Your great day will come; and when it shall dawn, I pray you to offer that first Mass for my poor soul and for all who are standing here.'

Antonio, deeply moved, was about to rise: but, as he lifted his head, he felt the Abbot's hand suddenly gripping his arm with superhuman strength. At the same time he saw the benign light which had beamed from the old eyes grow brighter and brighter, till the Abbot's whole face was transfigured and glorified. His brethren saw it too; and, by a common impulse, every one of them knelt down on the stones. At last the Abbot's voice began playing upon the tense silence, like an unseen hand on silver strings.

'My son,' said the far-away, clear tones. 'My son, rejoice. I was wrong. This is not the end. God clears my eyes. Long years must pass away: but I see our chapel swept and garnished. I see Antonio sitting once more in choir, doing the Work of God in his old place. I see him standing before the high altar. I see him holding up our great chalice. I see him offering the Holy Sacrifice for us all. Rejoice.'

He ceased; and while all were still marvelling at his prophecy the light quickly faded from the prophet's face. With closed eyes he sank wearily back upon his hard pillow. The Prior made a sign. Father Isidoro and a lay-brother remained to tend the sufferer; and, with full hearts and moving lips, the other monks passed out of the chamber one by one.

V

THE short night passed without any grave disorder. Indeed, only two light conflicts occurred. During Matins one of Carvalho's guards fell asleep on the floor of the nave, and his unseemly snoring would have hindered the general devotion if the giant Brother Cypriano had not picked up the slumberer and carried him out into the cloister as easily as he would have carried a little child. The other conflict, which was only settled by dragging the captain from his bed at the guest-house, broke out soon after sunrise, when the Brethren entered the sacristy to prepare for serving the Fathers' Masses. At first Carvalho and his men stoutly refused to allow a single chalice or paten or vestment to be brought out of the drawers and cupboards: but the Prior stood by the community's rights and the captain gave way.

Never before, in the oldest monk's memory, had the Hours been so fervently recited. Words which had become trite through thousands of repetitions glowed again with timely meaning. For instance, at the beginning of Matins, the verse 'O God, incline unto mine aid, O Lord make haste to help me' burst forth with passionate entreaty. The same thought was in every mind. In ten hours it would be noon: the Lord must make haste indeed. As for the Lord's Prayer every clause of it searched the monks' hearts. God's kingdom

seemed to be departing: but they said, 'Thy kingdom come.' With food and shelter both uncertain they pleaded, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' The squat Viscount's greedy face rose up before them all: yet they strove after sincerity when they said, 'As we forgive them that trespass against us.' As directed by the Holy Rule this petition was breathed silently: but it was aloud that they cried, 'Deliver us from evil.'

Despite their exaltation and their quickened faith, all were amazed when the Abbot sent word that their loving prayers had been answered and that he felt strong enough to pontificate at the High Mass. After Prime he called Antonio to his cell that he might speak with him alone. When the door was shut the young priest was about to kneel: but the Abbot prevented him.

'Rather,' he said, speaking with the utmost solemnity, 'ought I to kneel, Father Antonio, to you. God and our holy father Saint Benedict have called you to a glorious work. It is yours to lead our Order back to this place. But not yet. Be patient. Be humble. Be prudent. Keep your own counsel. Wait for the guidance of God.'

Antonio's heart glowed like a live coal within him.

'Whither God shall guide you I do not know,' the Abbot continued. 'Perhaps through dark and stony places. It may even be that for long years you will be unable to exercise your priesthood and to follow up your religious life. But, if such should be His trial of you, remember this. Our blessed Lord Himself did not break the Bread and take the Cup until the night before He died. Go in peace.'

Throughout the High Mass the flame burned ever

more and more hotly in Antonio's breast. He seemed, like Saint Teresa, to have the very stuff of his heart on fire. From the Introit to the Communion he duly sang every note that belonged to his duty; but, as the sacred mysteries proceeded, he felt as if only his body remained on the earth, and that his spirit was dwelling with the Abbot's in a supernal world of pure ecstasy.

The Viscount, the captain, and half the soldiers were present at the Mass, some of them assisting with devotion. They salved their consciences by reminding themselves that the Almighty was more powerful than the Government in Lisbon, and that He could be left to look after His own business. As for the Viscount and the captain, in some amazing fashion they had made up their quarrel of the night before, and it was evident that a mysterious understanding existed between them. As the Mass neared its close their nervousness could not be concealed. After all, the soldiers were Catholics; for even the most irreligious of them would not wish to die without a priest. The Viscount repeatedly whispered to the captain his fear that the Abbot was meditating a *coup*, and that he would suddenly win a strong bodyguard to his defence by threatening the despoilers with excommunication.

After the last gospel the Abbot advanced and stood leaning on his crozier. The Viscount went very red; the captain nearly white. But the bolt did not fall. In solemn tones the venerable man simply repeated the words of Jeremias:

'*Hereditas nostra versa est ad alienos; domus nostrae ad extraneos.*' *

* 'Our inheritance is turned to aliens; our houses to strangers.'

After a long pause he stretched out a fatherly hand and pleaded in the words of Saint Peter:

'*Et ipsi tanquam lapides vivi superaedificamini, domus spiritualis, sacerdotium sanctum, offerre spirituales hostias acceptabiles Deo per Jesum Christum.*' *

That was all. But it was too much for the Viscount and the captain. The captain's Latin was restricted to a confused recollection, of an assertion of Julius Cæsar's to the effect that all Gaul is divided into three parts, while the Viscount, who fully believed that *nil* meant 'never,' knew the single phrase *Nil desperandum*. Accordingly, as the Abbot retired to make his thanksgiving, they laid their puzzled heads together, wondering what secret words of command he had spoken to his followers.

It was five minutes to eleven.

'You saw that chalice?' whispered the Viscount. 'There's another like it, only bigger. The rubies are from India. They're Burmese. They came through Goa from the hoard of some Indian king or other. I know their whole history.'

He was developing a humbugging tale about the difficulty of marketing large rubies for their full value when a gong-like sound, rich and deep, stopped him short. It was the great bell of the abbey which had been ungeared during the Abbot's illness. Ten more strokes slowly followed.

'Eleven o'clock,' said the captain. But nothing happened and nobody appeared. The Viscount and he exchanged nervous glances.

* 'Be ye also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'

A minute later Carvalho entered and announced that the community was assembled, with the Abbot at its head, in the paved space which fronted the chapel. The captain at once ordered that all the soldiers, save the sacristy guards, should fall in and attend him on the same spot.

At five minutes past eleven Carvalho's words of command had ceased echoing through the cloisters, and the men's heels were already resounding on the stones outside. Some one threw open the western doors of the chapel, and a wave of warm air, heavy with the scent of orange-blossom, surged into the cool dimness to mingle itself with the lingering fragrance of the incense. The captain looked out. He could see the monks, all in black, drawn up in two lines behind the Abbot, and, facing them, his own troopers, dismounted and unkempt. The captain strode forth boldly into the bright sunshine, and the Abbot came forward a step to meet him. It was like an encounter of two old-world champions for single combat, with their little armies looking on. They exchanged salutations punctiliously.

As the Viscount pottered up in the captain's rear the Prior took a place beside the Abbot, and began to speak in such far-ringing tones that the soldiers twenty yards away could hear every syllable.

'His most illustrious Reverence the Lord Abbot,' he said, 'charges me to give your Excellencies his answer and the answer of this community. We cannot give up these holy places either to Portugal or to any man within her borders: because they are not ours to give. If we must abandon our patrimony for a while, we shall do so under protest against this robbing of

God and of the faithful departed. But there are limits to our meekness. We are Portuguese men as well as Catholic monks, and we shall not surrender this abbey to your Excellencies until the inventory has been signed and delivered.'

To the consternation of the more aged and timid monks the captain made a gesture of scorn. All his words and actions the night before had encouraged them to hope that he would prove their staunchest ally against the Viscount. They did not know and could not guess that he had bartered away the remains of his honour for a promise of twelve hundred and fifty English pounds.

'And if we refuse?' he said. 'If the noble Viscount and I refuse; if no inventory is signed or delivered: then what will your Worships do?'

The Prior answered promptly and firmly:

'We will see to it that your Excellencies do not rob their masters on earth as well as their Master in heaven. We will see to it that your Excellencies, as well as ourselves, obey this decree. Portugal shall not be cheated. Let the inventory be signed and we will go forth without strife to regain our rights elsewhere. Peace is our watchword, and we are vowed to poverty. But let your Excellencies refuse——'

He made a long pause, and only when the suspense had become intolerable did he add in ringing tones:

'Then these brave men who have bled for Portugal will do their duty. They are not hirelings: they are volunteers and patriots. Senhor captain, do not deceive yourself. Men are not born in cowls. Under Wellington I led Portuguese troops into fourteen battles. Your men love Portugal, and they do not

hate God. I have only to give the word and more than half of them will be mine. Here is the inventory and here are pens and ink. Your Excellencies will verify it —and sign.'

Two lay brethren approached carrying a deal table, upon which Father Sebastian laid two copies of the inventory, an earthenware inkstand and a bundle of goose-quills. At the same time Brother Cypriano bore forward a carved chair, in which the Abbot sat down.

Ungovernable rage set fire to the captain's wits at the very moment when he needed all his coolness. He had sold his soul and his country for gold which, after all, he was not to receive. He turned savagely towards his seducer, and saw with disgust that the Viscount, whose sense of dignity was nearly as small as his sense of humour, had opened a vast umbrella.

'What are we to do?' the captain rapped out.

'Do? We refuse, of course. It's all bravado. Leave them to me. I will answer.'

He turned to the Prior with a ridiculous air of importance and shut up his umbrella. But before he could speak a word the guffaw which had so much disconcerted and offended him the night before in the vestibule broke again from one of the soldiers. As the Prior had said, these men were not mercenaries. Their ranks comprised a salt-winner from Aveiro, the two sons of a Lisbon saddler, a fisherman from Figueira da Foz, two quarrymen from the Minho, and a score or so of peasants from the Beiras: but one and all of them had something of the fidalgo in his air, and one and all of them was dimly conscious of the upstart Viscount's low breeding.

The guffaw was not the worst. Although the troopers

still stood at attention, the captain's sharp ears detected mutterings and whisperings. During the morning the men had debated among themselves the motives of the Viscount for risking his neck on horseback in order to do work which pertained to a sheriff's officer, and they had decided that the Abbot's demand was prudent, patriotic, and just. Again, the hospitality of the Cellarer, the impressive rites in the chapel, and, above all, the holiness of the Abbot had increased their distaste for the work they were come to do.

'Our final word——' began the Viscount, pitching high his tin-whistle voice. But the captain came to his senses in time. He seized the little man's fat arm angrily and hissed in his ear:

'You cursed fool, be quiet. Wait.' And, in a loud voice, he said to the Prior, 'I will sign.'

A cheer from the soldiers greeted his words. Then, so that they might verify the treasures detailed in the inventory, the Prior conducted his glowering visitors to the sacristy. The Blessed Sacrament had already been removed: but he seemed to shrink from polluting the chapel with their presence, and therefore he chose a roundabout route. Passing through the cloisters he led the way through the kitchen.

As he entered the lofty room the Viscount, despite his chagrin, could not repress a cry of admiration. A dado of blue and white tiles ran all round to a height of six feet; and, above, the lime-washed walls were as white as the purest snow, save where the word *Pax* had been painted upon them in shapely letters of blue. Above the fireplace, which was in the middle of the room, rose a canopy of burnished copper, so elongated that it pierced the vaulted roof. This was the chimney.

But the great surprise was a rivulet of clear water which rushed down a stone channel the whole length of the room. Centuries before, the monks had diverted a mountain stream from its bed, and ever since, night and day, winter and summer, the cheerful waters had gone on leaping and singing through the great white hall. Near its egress, at the north-west corner of the kitchen, the rivulet ran through a square frame of perforated boards. Like a similar contrivance in the vast and famous abbey of Alcobaça this frame formed a place of storage for a few freshwater fish, so that the refectory tables should not go unfurnished even when the Atlantic storms kept the monks' boat idle.

But the Prior was not in a mood to act as cicerone to sightseers, and he strode on until the sacristy was reached. Carvalho's guards were at their posts, and they had been joined by four monks who had come directly through the chapel. Among them were Sebastian and Antonio.

The sacristy was dustless and spotless; and when the cupboards were opened every inch of embroidery and every ounce of plate were found in their places as described in the inventory. At the sight of the gold and silver and precious stones the Viscount's eyes glittered like glass beads. He would have taken the holy vessels in his fat hands to fondle them had not the Prior sternly repelled him. By way of revenge, as well as to mislead the captain, the Viscount then set himself to depreciate everything. The triptych was not Limoges, and he had his doubts about the rubies. The vestments were falling to pieces. As for the Gran Vasco, who was Gran Vasco, after all? He was a

painter whom not one collector in a thousand had ever heard of. Besides, the painting was certainly a copy.

To these remarks the Prior did not pay the smallest heed. When everything had been verified, he kissed with exceeding reverence a reliquary containing the relics of martyrs who had suffered for the Church. Then he replaced this last treasure on its shelf and locked the cupboard. The captain held out his hand for the keys, but the Prior answered:

'After you have signed, Senhor Captain. At noon. Till then your guards are keys enough.'

Together with the four monks he quitted the sacristy, leaving the two men to follow. But they lingered. To get out of earshot of the guards the captain drew the Viscount into the chapel, and muttered hurriedly:

'We sign. Then we pack up the stuff and bury it. To-night we send to the Government a report. We tell them how these fellows threatened resistance and tried to win over my soldiers. We tell them how the Abbot is an old miser doting on the gold and silver; that we fear a raid of their sympathisers in force; and that we have thought it wise to bury the treasure. We ask them to send a lock-up van and twenty more men to bring it away. And meanwhile . . .'

'Yes. Meanwhile . . .' repeated the Viscount, beaming and chuckling. 'Meanwhile . . . By the way, you see these tiles on the walls?'

Yes, the captain saw them. The walls of the oblong nave were almost entirely clothed with *azulejos*, or blue-and-white tiles. The multitudinous squares formed large pictures crowded with life-size figures.

'If we could get them down some day from the

walls,' murmured the Viscount, 'I know an Englishman who would pay a thousand pounds for them.'

He was interrupted by Brother Cypriano, who demanded in a peremptory tone:

'How much longer are we to wait for your Excellencies?'

They did not return through the kitchen and cloister, but followed Brother Cypriano out of the chapel directly into the paved space. The captain looked haggard, but the Viscount was radiant.

'The keys are here?' he asked. 'Good. Then give me a pen.'

Forgetting himself in his elation, he began to sign the name of his humble days: but he quickly scratched out the half-written word and substituted his grandiose signature as Visconde de Ponte Quebrada. Then he handed the quill to the morose captain, who slowly subscribed his name.

'There!' cried the Viscount, picking up the great iron keys of the abbey and the small steel keys of the sacristy cupboard. 'Now I hope everybody is satisfied. I wish your Reverences a pleasant journey.'

VI

The big bell banged noon. In front of the chapel Saint Benedict's heavy-hearted sons were ready to depart. Only Brother Cypriano was absent.

No one stirred. The captain glanced round with new anxiety. But his suspense did not last long. A lighter bell smote through the dull resoundings of the great gong. It was Brother Cypriano ringing the Angelus. With bowed he[illegible] the monks repeated the Angelic Salutation. The soldiers and the captain uncovered: and, with an awkward grab at the brim of his sombrero, even the Viscount made a show of following their example.

This last act of faith being ended, the Abbot made a sign, and two of the brethren approached him with a litter. The old man's miraculous tide of vitality was ebbing as fast as it had flowed, and the captain knew that, in the circumstances, the Minister in Lisbon would not approve of this indecent haste. But he had involved himself too deeply with the Viscount to draw back, and it was essential to his plans that the whole monastic garrison should vacate their barracks without delay. Therefore he contented himself with uttering a string of regrets which nobody heeded.

It was a quarter-past twelve when the procession started. The monks went forth two and two, like the Seventy in the gospel. At their head walked the Prior

and the Cellarer, who had much to discuss concerning ways and means. The Abbot's litter was borne at first by Father Isidoro and Father Antonio. Brother Cypriano and the other lay-monks brought up the rear. They led five pack-mules, whose burdens contained little more than the monks' winter shoes and habits, and a blanket for each one. The Prior had not asked leave to take either the mules or their loads, but the captain had not raised any objection. As for their personal belongings, the fathers and brethren seemed to be almost literally fulfilling the Holy Rule, and to be carrying away almost nothing of their own. Each monk held a small bundle, in which the four volumes of his breviary were the principal item.

They wound down the paved way without looking back. The Viscount grinned and rubbed his hands. Soon the black files were lost to sight in the avenue of camellias, and a few minutes afterwards the strident grinding of iron on iron proclaimed their arrival at the rusty gate.

The captain gave a signal to Carvalho, whose men had been busy saddling their horses, and immediately a detachment twenty strong cantered after the exiles.

'A guard of honour,' chuckled the Viscount.

'I am obeying the Minister's instructions,' answered the captain dryly.

'Like a good boy. And at the same time you've got rid of half these prying peasants. But come, we haven't sampled the cellar. And I could eat a couple of those fat trout.'

The captain flung aside his uncomfortable thoughts and agreed, with an oath, to a carouse. The pair

plunged into the cool corridors, to ransack the larder with small success.

Meanwhile the unpitiful sun was beating on the monks' heads and on the Abbot's rude litter. The cruel ball of fire hung in a dome of so hard a blue that it might have been cut from one immense sapphire. The Atlantic chafed in its bed with a simmering sound, and blinded the eyes like molten copper.

Carvalho and his troopers, who had been hanging on the monks' rear, were the first to surrender. Riding forward to the head of the train, Carvalho in person suggested that both drivers and driven should encamp amicably in a neighbouring grove of eucalyptus until the fiercest heat had passed. The Prior agreed.

Of all the eucalyptus groves in Portugal, the grove which the travellers entered was one of the oldest and most grandly grown. Just above it a small pine wood offered a deeper and cooler shade, and a rapid brook made the oasis complete. Almost immediately some of the soldiers began to fraternise with the monks, pressing upon them dark *broas* baked from maize and rye, and handing round the wine-skins. The monks, in their turn, offered salt fish, which the soldiers joyfully ate quite raw. After the repast the soldiers flung themselves down full length to sleep upon the pine-needles; and although the monks produced their breviaries and tried to say the Office, ere long most of them succumbed to drowsiness.

Antonio was wide awake. His share of the frail old Abbot's weight had seemed not much more than a feather to his youthful strength. He looked round. The mules and horses were browsing happily in the lush herbage. Carvalho and a corporal were spelling out

some papers in low tones. The Cellarer and the Prior were equally engrossed in writing and figuring. Under the densest pine tree Father Isidoro and Father Sebastian were keeping vigil over the sleeping Abbot.

The young monk sauntered eastwards, following up the course of the stream. He suspected that its dancing waters were those which had flowed through the monastery kitchen, and a few minutes breasting of the pine-crowded slope proved that he was right. From the top of the knoll he could make out the dazzling white front of the chapel, framed in dark granite, and he could hear the dull boom of the great bell striking two o'clock.

At the foot of the knoll, half hidden in verdure, some dilapidat[illegible] buildings huddled on the banks of the rivulet. He descended to explore them. The windows of the little house were broken, and weeds choked the garden. There were also two barns, raised on stone pillars to thwart the rats, a byre, a threshing floor, and a little orangery in full blossom. Apparently many years had slipped by since the place was inhabited.

Having satisfied his curiosity Antonio was turning away when a thought struck him. He approached the buildings again and examined them much more closely. Then he took his resolution. With his eyes fixed on the glittering white chapel, which shone down upon him like the Bride of the Lamb, he knelt in the long grass and repeated the Benedictine prayer, *Excita Domine*. His prayer done, he remained a few minutes in meditation before he sought his brethren.

Regaining the knoll's top and beginning to descend, Antonio found that the scene had changed for the worse. The attitudes of some of his drowsy companions were

neither dignified nor picturesque. They were wearing their worst tunics for the journey, and the grey dust from the road did not improve the rusty black of the garments. Their bundles looked untidy and paltry. More disenchanting still, some of the monks who were still awake seemed to have descended from their exaltation and to be sourly grumbling together over their misfortunes; while the faces of the Prior and the Cellarer shewed that they were still deeply debating the community's creature-comforts.

For a moment Antonio's enthusiastic faith was shocked and chilled. Was this cause worthy, after all, of the bitter sacrifice he had resolved to make? But his doubt vanished in an instant in the light of a thought which came to him as if from heaven. He thought of the great flights, the great martyrdoms, and understood that if he could have been a looker-on at them all, he would have seen the jewel of faithful love shining out from a dull alloy. Saint Benedict's flight from Subiaco to Monte Cassino, the martyrdom of Saint Laurence—no doubt even these holy happenings had had their ugly elements, their sordid accompaniments. Their realities did not correspond with the idealised versions of stately altar-pieces, and stained glass, and illuminated parchments, and statuary. More. He reminded himself that, according to human standards, even his divine Master had passed poorly from a mean birth to a base death. He recalled the words of Isaias, *Non est species ei, neque decor; et vidimus eum et non erat aspectus et desideravimus eum:* 'There is no beauty in him nor comeliness; and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness that we should desire him.'

VII

Two miles outside Navares a hurrying horseman almost collided with the head of the monks' procession. He turned out to be a courier from Lisbon with an urgent letter for the Prior.

Pleased to be spared the rest of the journey to the monastery, and still better pleased with the broad coin which the Cellarer gave him from the community's scanty purse, the messenger delivered his package and was about to set his horse's head homewards, without enquiring what the monks' exodus might mean, when Carvalho bade him halt.

'Your Reverence,' said Carvalho to the Prior none too respectfully, 'I have no orders to stop letters, but I have positive orders that your Reverences must not attempt to harangue the people of Navares. And I have further orders that your Reverences must not remain in Navares beyond noon to-morrow. I am to conduct all who wish it to Lisbon, where the Government will settle the matter of the pensions of your Reverences as soon as possible.'

He showed the Prior two more sheets from the Viscount's inexhaustible store of papers in support of his announcement. For a moment the Prior lost his self-control.

'Cur!' he said.

Carvalho bowed, with the scornful smile of borrowed

power towards fallen greatness, and rode off to dispose his men in two extended files, which could, if necessary, envelope the monks completely. The Prior also went back along the line, briefly telling the news to each pair of monks and bidding them be ready for a council in their lodging at Navares.

As the Cellarer's kinsman, the Navares corn-merchant, lived on the outskirts of the town, the shelter of his house was gained before news of the monks' arrival had reached the townspeople. The corn-merchant was a convinced Liberal, and something of an anti-clerical: but he received the Cellarer's brethren with hearty sympathy and lavish hospitality. He gave up to the Abbot his own room. The beds of clean straw which he caused to be made along the whole length of a newly lime-washed granary were softer than the mattresses at the monastery, and his supper of soup and salt fish and cheese and wine was appetising and abundant. Perhaps his best deed, however, was his expulsion of Carvalho and the corporal, who coolly walked into the granary so as to listen to the monks' discussions.

'Very well,' shouted Carvalho after the Cellarer had convinced him that his precious papers gave him no right to violate a private domicile, 'I go: but I forbid their Reverences to hold any kind of assembly.'

'Their Reverences,' retorted the corn-merchant, who feared man even less than he feared God, 'will do as they please so long as they are in my house. As for your Worship, he will kindly walk out of it.'

After supper the council began. *Veni Creator Spiritus* was sung. Then the Prior rose, with the letter from Lisbon in his hand, and said:

'Dear Fathers and Brethren. God help us to bear

our many sorrows. The courier has brought bad news.

'For some reason, which the Visconde de Ponte Quebrada could explain, our house was the first to be seized. But before many days have passed the spoilers will possess themselves of all the houses of our Order. We are forbidden to take counsel with any other community of outcast religious, or to establish ourselves in new houses. Without God's help this is the end of the Portuguese Benedictine congregation.

'From man we have nothing to hope. The Government is one of bad faith. In my hand I have the proofs that the earlier laws of this Spring were shams. All the time it was intended to suppress the Orders entirely: but the Government dared not let the people see the thick end of the wedge. They have revealed it at last with fear and trembling. Their Bill was fathered upon one Minister alone, the Senhor Joaquim d'Aguiar. It was arranged that, in the event of public indignation, the other Ministers were to repudiate openly both the Senhor d'Aguiar and his Bill, although, in secret, it was their joint act and deed. Portugal is being governed in a poisonous mist of tricks and lies.

'But why does the Portuguese people suffer God to be robbed and His servants thrown into the highway without crowding to the rescue? Alas, dear Fathers and Brethren, I know the answer. Our poor land is sick of war: but there is a deeper reason why even the most fervent Catholics will not unsheath the sword again in our defence. Dom Miguel deceived them. Just as Dom Pedro has made a sham of Liberalism, so Dom Miguel has made a sham of piety. Dom Miguel raised the cry of "Throne and Altar." But he cared

only for the Throne. If Saint Michael and all the angels should descend to earth in our defence, the Catholics of Portugal might join their banners: but the Portuguese Catholics will not believe again in any merely human leader. They remember Evora Monte.

'More. In many lands this tyranny and treachery of the Government will be applauded and upheld. Many lands have lent the Emperor Pedro money, and they claim the right to influence him in secret. The Protestants of England will rejoice in our downfall because we are Catholics and monks: the atheists and Jews of France and the Low Countries because we are Christians. The oppression of monks will spread. Spain, France, even Italy, will suffer. *Pater dimitte illis; non enim sciunt quid faciunt:* "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."'

The long room was growing dimmer while the Prior was speaking, and when he had finished he could hardly see the features of his auditors. For two or three long minutes silence blent itself with the dusk. The livelier-minded among the monks sate still because they felt that the Prior's words were all too true, while the simpler souls were cowed and hushed by the splintering of their last props of hope.

The Prior, not wishing to impose his bare opinions upon the community, went to the window and read aloud the long and clear letter from Lisbon which a devout layman had made so much haste to despatch. At the end of his reading he called for candles; and, as soon as they were brought, he threw the council open.

No one spoke. All eyes were fixed on Antonio, all ears were waiting for his words. Amidst the prosaic discomforts of their hot march the monks had seen the

young priest merely as one more dusty and perspiring exile: but, after the speech of the Prior, they recovered some of the mood in which they had listened to the Abbot's prophecy the night before. The scene had a solemnity of its own. Instead of carved stalls the monks sat on boxes, casks, and heaps of straw: but the few candles, casting vague shadows of black-robed figures upon the death-white walls, filled the mind with bodings of supernatural mystery. One and all gazed upon Antonio's face, fully persuaded that he would speak and ready to obey.

Antonio, becoming conscious of their expectation, flushed and fastened his eyes on the ground. The Prior, putting into words the general feeling, said gently:

'Father Antonio, be not afraid. What said our Father Saint Benedict in the Holy Rule? *Ideo autem omnes ad consilium vocari diximus; quia saepe juniori Dominus revelat quod melius est:* "We have ordained that all be called to Council, because it is often to the youngest that God revealeth what is best." Speak.'

The Prior's words, the intent looks of his brethren, the shadows, the candle-flames, the silence, seemed to Antonio like so many hands, great and small, held out hungrily for his words. Besides, was it not disloyal, mean, unbrotherly to lock away a secret from his brethren? At this thought the hands came searching and plucking in his very breast. But the heavenly light, which had been burning like a bright lamp within him all day long, once more shewed him his duty. He knew that among the monks were old men of enfeebled mind and weakened will, whose worn wits would not be proof against the artful pryings and questionings of

spies, and that he had no right to burden them with a secret they could not keep. Yet this was a minor consideration. The supreme fact was that God was saying to him, 'Hold thy peace.'

Only when the silence had become unbearable did Antonio answer:

'Father Prior, indulge me. If I must speak, I crave leave to speak last.'

As affectation and false humility were faults which had long been cast out of the community, the Prior reluctantly took Antonio at his word. Indeed, there was that in the young priest's voice which compelled the acquiescence of all.

'Then let us, Fathers and Brethren,' said the Prior at length, 'speak in turn. I will begin. But all I shall say is subject to alteration, nay, perhaps to complete reversal, by the counsel Father Antonio shall give us.'

A low murmur of approval rounded off his words.

'My own counsel,' continued the Prior, 'would be this. The Father Cellarer knows to a vintem how much money we can find. Let us, for the present, turn our cheek to the smiter and abandon our community life. Let each of us decide where and how he can best live till we have bettered or worsened our case in Lisbon, and let him declare to the Father Cellarer what money he will need. For the present Father Isidoro and Brother Cypriano and I will remain here with our beloved Father Abbot. He believes'—here the Prior's voice trembled—'that God will call his soul away to-morrow; and it is not for us to say "God forbid." But be it to-morrow, or next week, or next month, or next year, here we stay, Father Isidoro, Brother Cypriano and I, even though all the horses and men in Portugal

be sent to move us. And, when we have laid our beloved Father's remains in the earth, I will join the Father Cellarer in Lisbon. We shall live in the house of the writer of this letter, the Senhor Aureliano Gonçalves de Sousa, the notary, in the Rua Augusta. Let every one of us keep in touch, one with another, at that address until our future is clearly known.'

The Cellarer spoke in the same sense. He was followed by the monks in turn. Every one of them, with varying degrees of conviction, repeated the Prior's saving clause about Antonio's coming words, and every one of them endorsed the Prior's counsel.

Father Isidoro and seven other choir-monks added that their refuge would be in a house of their Order on Spanish soil, just across the Guadiana. It appeared that they had been discussing the matter all day, and that they had fixed upon this particular Spanish monastery because it was within two hours' ride of Portugal. Father Sebastian announced that he would take shelter at the Inglezinhos in Lisbon. These English Fathers, he said, could not be suppressed because they were secular priests and British subjects: but they had a cloister and something of community life. Other monks spoke of Vigo, of Santiago de Compostela, of Salamanca, and of a new house in Belgium where there was a strict observance. Two dreamed of Monte Cassino itself, and one surprised the Council by mentioning a Benedictine house in Protestant England, not far from legendary Glastonbury. Some of the oldest Fathers named friends, clerical and lay, in various cities of Portugal, beneath whose roofs they could die quietly if the Prior's and the Cellarer's fight in Lisbon should end in defeat. As for the lay-brethren, they

decided to go in a body to Evora, where Brother Lorenzo had claims on the protection of the Archbishop.

It was inevitable that these announcements should generate in the Council an unmonkish excitement. After having been so long persuaded that they would live the rest of their lives and die their due deaths within the same square mile of earth, there was something strangely fascinating in this sudden unrolling of the map of Europe. The solid sorrow of their dispossession was almost hidden for the moment under a whirl and flutter of little arrangements; even as a fatal reef is hidden under the pretty spray of the rollers it has smashed to glittering atoms. The buzz of talk which followed on the more formal speaking was not without the shrill note of schoolboys as they discuss a thousand plans for an approaching holiday.

The Cellarer who, despite his preoccupation with its temporals, was one of the community's most spiritually-minded members, swiftly detected the danger.

'Father Prior,' he said loudly, 'all have spoken save Father Antonio.'

His bright firm voice cut through the dull buzz like an eagle dashing through starlings, scattering them all in flight. Every monk felt the just rebuke, and once more there was silence.

'Father Antonio,' said the Prior, quietly and kindly.

Antonio felt that he could not speak from his place by the wall. He rose and advanced with bowed head into the midst of his brethren. The corn-merchant's tiny candles were flickering down into their sockets; and he waited a few moments in the hope that darkness might enveil him before he opened his mouth. But the lights leapt into fuller brightness. He raised his head.

Everywhere he saw eyes, eyes—old eyes and young eyes, loving eyes and stern eyes, dull eyes and eager eyes, hopeful eyes and fearful eyes—everywhere eyes, eyes fixed on him, Antonio, alone.

'Father Prior——' he began. But his prepared words were taken away. The eyes went on piercing him until he felt like the holy martyr Sebastian in the midst of the sharp arrows. At last words burst from him.

'My Fathers, my Brethren,' he cried. 'Forgive me. To-morrow I am going back into the world!'

One of the lights went out suddenly, as if Antonio's apostasy had struck it down like a blow. But for five or six seconds no one stirred or spoke. A second candle-flame leapt up and died away. Then, in the dimness, uprose a confused murmuring, sharpened here and there by exclamations of scorn or anger or bitter sorrow. More distinctly than the rest was heard the garrulous contempt of Father Bernardo, whose lapses into the sin of gluttony had so often scandalised the brethren. Father Bernardo's righteous scorn was sincere. He had no vocation to be a saint or a hero himself; but he knew that saints and heroes were necessary, and he despised Antonio for turning his back upon the light.

The Cellarer left his seat and came to Antonio's side. Isidoro and Sebastian followed him, and other monks shewed signs of doing the same. But before a word could be breathed into his ear, Antonio wrenched himself out of the midst of the increasing group and threw himself on his knees at the Prior's feet.

'For the love of Jesus Christ,' he pleaded, in low intense tones, 'bid them leave me in peace.'

The Prior took one of the remaining candles and

looked at Antonio intently. At first a shade of scorn darkened his cheek; for he imagined that he saw in Antonio's eyes no more than the physical anguish of a hunted animal. But he looked more deeply; and he saw more.

'Fathers and Brethren,' he commanded. 'Let us have order and silence. Father Sebastian shall speak with Father Antonio; and, after him, the Father Cellarer. It is time for Compline.'

As everybody knew the almost invariable prayers and psalms of Compline by heart, there was no need for fresh candles, and the community began to recite the office. All had resumed their places save Antonio, who moved slowly away to the obscurest corner, near the granary door. There he stood, blending his prayers and praises with those of his brethren for the last time. He joined in the Confession with deep humility, smiting his breast: and when the Hebdomadarius gave the Absolution, Antonio crossed himself as if Calvary itself were before his eyes. In due time the Psalms, the Hymn, the Little Chapter, and *Pater Noster* had been said, and the monks began the proper Antiphon of the Blessed Virgin, *Salve Regina*. Repeating the pious words, Antonio quietly opened the granary door; and, at the end of the prayer *Omnipotens sempiterne Deus*, he slipped forth into the soft night.

Across the courtyard a light was burning in the room where the Abbot still lay in unnatural sleep. Antonio drew near and gazed through the glass. The old man's hands were clasped on his breast, and his garment fell into stiff folds like the alabaster draperies of a mitred effigy on a tomb. Antonio breathed towards the frail body the prayer he had heard at the beginning of Com-

pline, *Noctem quietam et finem perfectum:* 'May the Almighty Lord grant him a quiet night and a perfect end.'

As he turned away with a bursting heart he came face to face with Father Sebastian, who had seen his stealthy flight. Sebastian, as usual, was drawing his habit closely round his body. There was more than usual of the consumptive glow on his cheek and of the too bright fire in his eyes. The two men faced each other searchingly.

'Father Antonio,' asked Sebastian at last, 'is this our Lord's work or the devil's?'

'It is our Lord's,' returned Antonio in a firm voice. 'Take heed that you do not hinder it.'

He brushed past and opened the wicket which led into the high road. But, before he passed out, he seized his friend's thin hand in a fierce grip.

'Sebastian,' he said, 'ask all my brethren to forgive me and to pray for me. Take care of my breviary, if you can. Good-bye.'

A sentry challenged him as he strode forth: but Antonio threw him aside. 'I am not your prisoner,' he said; and the fellow, bemused by wine and by fatigue, fell back without another word.

Hurrying through Navares he contrived to pass the apothecary's shop unobserved by the throng of leading townsmen who were warmly debating the rights and wrongs of the monks' case. Outside the tavern he was less successful; and, in one instance, a lewd insult which was flung after him led to bitter rejoinders and a scuffle. A young man, whose pleasant face contrasted oddly with his words, ran after Antonio to say that the monks ought to have been driven out long ago: but,

on the other hand, four separate men offered him hospitality, ranging from a pull of wine to a night's lodging.

Thanking friends and forgiving foes, the young priest pressed forward until the last houses of Navares were more than a league behind him. Only then did he sink down to rest. His halting-place was on a more northerly point of the long range of hills on which stood the monastery from which he had been cast into exile. By the stars he knew that exactly twenty-four hours had passed since his reverie on the cork bench, on the flat roof of the cloister.

The airs around him, like the airs of the night before in the monastery garden, were rich with scents of lemon-blossom and honeysuckle. The Atlantic still lay unvexed by wind: but the ocean swell, as it searched the creeks and caves, hummed heavily and wearily, like a great bee mining in the bells of flowers that held no honey.

BOOK II

THE RETURN

I

Antonio slept soundly until sunrise. When he awoke the larks were in full song. He sat up. The carpet of pine-needles around him was curiously patterned with long black stripes—the tree-trunks' shadows cast by the low, strong sun. No wind moved in the wood: but out at sea the weather seemed to have freshened, for the chaunt of the Atlantic was quicker and louder.

The monk knelt down and said his morning prayers. Then, obeying the call of the great waters, he arose and struck along the margin of a maize-field towards the shore. In half an hour he was ankle-deep in fine yellow sand. But the beach fell away too steeply and the undertow sucked too strongly for a plunge, so he turned and plodded northward.

Two miles of toilsome going brought him to a little estuary, about a furlong wide. Along the farther bank sprawled a white village with a considerable tower: but none of the villagers appeared to be astir. The outflowing tide had left a deep pool of clear water. Antonio swiftly stripped and jumped in; and only when the level of the water had so far fallen that further swimming was impossible did he emerge from his bath.

Refreshed and strengthened he turned inland and pushed up-stream until he reached a point to which the salt water never rose. There, in a cold cascade, he washed his under-garments; and while they were

drying in the sun he sat under an evergreen oak, wrapped in his coarse habit, and began to recite the Divine Office. Although he had perforce left behind at Navares the bundle which contained three volumes of his breviary, he had brought away in his hand the *Pars Æstivalis*, from which he had said the last Compline with his brethren; and, by the time his clothes were dry, he had recited the whole of Matins, Lauds, and Prime.

Having dressed himself Antonio sat down to mature his plans. He decided, first of all, to forswear false pride. Excepting one volume of a breviary and the poor clothes he sat in he was without a possession in the world. It was true that he owned a pair of brawny arms, and he was willing and eager to use them hard from morning to night: but he felt that the prime necessity was to exchange his habit for a layman's dress. It was not fitting that a monk of Saint Benedict should wander about like a mendicant friar. Accordingly, Antonio resolved to enter the village and to seek aid, for the first and last time, from the secular clergy.

He waded the stream above the cascade and descended the northern bank until he reached a lane roughly paved with boulders. The lane wound in and out between low walls: but it led at last to the foot of a mound on which rose a vast oblong church with lime-washed walls and granite quoins. The sacristan, in a very short and skimpy scarlet gown, was in the act of unlocking the doors; and, through his offices, Antonio soon found himself in the ample presence of the *padre-cura*.

The *padre-cura* received his visitor with uncertain approval. He was a hard-headed old man, whose counsels were less eagerly sought by his flock in the

confessional than in difficult cases of calving, or boat-caulking, or bush-vine pruning. He believed every article of the longest and latest of the creeds implicitly and lived becomingly: but there was not a tinge of the mystic in his personality. The sight of a monk slightly nettled him. This secular priest felt that a religious must be contemptuous of his common-sense, every-day Christianity, and that he must be tacitly challenging him to a superfine and unpractical piety. Besides, the cura's friends were Liberals, and they had quieted his qualms concerning the new laws against the monasteries by assuring him, as they assured so many others of his class, that the swollen revenues of the suppressed houses would go to augment the wretched stipends of the rural clergy.

Antonio began to explain whence he had come. But the sacristan was already tugging away at the bell-rope, and the cura interrupted.

'You are not a lay-brother?' he demanded. 'You are a priest?'

'I am a priest,' answered Antonio.

'Then you shall say my Mass,' said the cura promptly. 'We will talk about your business at breakfast.'

'I cannot say your Mass, Father,' responded Antonio, flushing sadly. 'I was ordained priest only forty-eight hours ago, and yesterday morning we were driven from the abbey. God alone knows when and where my first Mass will be said.'

The old cura's heart melted towards the young monk. Unmystical though he was, he recalled the high mood of his own ordination day, the fine happiness of his own first Mass. He laid his rough hand kindly on Antonio's shoulder.

'Come,' he said, 'if you can't say my Mass, at least you shall serve it.'

Antonio served the cura's Mass at a gilded altar, tricked out with gaudy vases of faded crimson paper roses in the very worst taste he had ever seen. But the old priest, despite the nasality of his Latin and the jerkiness of his genuflexions, said Mass with an intensity of recollection which edified the server exceedingly; and the few peasants who knelt on the boarded floor were not behind him in devotion.

The cura's breakfast was enlarged in Antonio's honour. Over and above the inevitable bacalhau, or salted stock-fish, there was a whole hake. It had been caught only half a dozen hours before, and it made a fine show with its head and tail projecting over the ends of a long rough dish, gaily painted with birds and flowers. There was also a piled-up mess of boiled beef and ham sausage, banked on rice and white cabbage and moated round with a broth full of chick-peas. Each breakfaster was also served with a couple of eggs, fried in olive oil; and the meal was rounded off by a basket of late strawberries. To wash down the solids the cura opened three bottles of sharp green wine.

Antonio ate and drank sparingly. During the meal he confined himself to answering his host's innumerable questions, and listening, without resentment, to sly hints about monkish arrogance and luxury: but while the cura was busy with his strawberries, he told simply and shortly the tale of the alien Visconde de Ponte Quebrada. As he ceased speaking he saw that the old man was half won round to the monks' side.

'And now, what are you going to do?' asked the cura.

'For the present,' said Antonio, 'I am going back into the world. I will be a burden upon none. I am going to work; and, when I have put a little money by, I have a plan of doing something for my Order.'

'What can you do for a living?'

'I understand vines and wine. At the abbey I had charge of the vineyard.'

'You are making your way to Oporto?'

'Yes. To Oporto.'

'Very well. I sell two pipes of green wine every year to a firm there. I will give you a letter. But what about your clothes? You can't go back into the world like this.'

'I sought you this morning, Father,' said Antonio with a great effort, 'for this very reason.'

'How much money have you?'

'Not any, Father. Beyond one volume of my breviary and the clothes you see me wearing, I have nothing in this world.'

The old man emitted his amazement in a protracted, clucking noise. Then he rose abruptly and commanded:

'Come with me.'

In an otherwise empty room at the head of the stairs stood a large clothes-press. As the cura threw open its doors a waft of camphor and lavender filled Antonio's nostrils. Unfolding some linen wrappers the cura took out a suit of black clothes, such as country tailors make for doctors and lawyers and officials.

'I have worn these clothes twice,' said the cura, 'once at the Bishop's funeral and once at my niece's wedding. Ah, my friend, I was a man in those days, not a shrimp. That was before I had my fever. I could

eat a dinner with any man in the diocese: yes, and empty a bottle too. But since I've lost my appetite and come down to skin and bone, what good are these clothes to me? They'd flap about on me like a sack on a scarecrow. Take them, my son, and a good riddance to them.'

As the cura had just consumed fully three pounds' weight of bacalhau, hake, beef, vegetables, and dark bread, to say nothing of the strawberries and the eggs, Antonio's gravity was shaken. His host was still so rosy and rotund that the young monk dared not picture him as he must have been before he sank to his shrimp-like and skin-and-bone condition. But it was only for a moment that he found the old man ridiculous. The main thing was that he was relieving Antonio's need with a tact as beautiful as his generosity.

The cura went to the window while Antonio donned the clothes. They fitted him ill, but not intolerably. Indeed, the cura, when he turned round, affirmed that there was not a tailor in Lisbon itself who could have fitted Antonio better. There was a difficulty about a hat, the monk's head being larger than the cura's; and it was finally agreed that a decent hat must be dispensed with until the traveller reached the nearest town, and that an improvisation of straw or grass must meanwhile serve in its stead.

Leading the way to his bedroom the old man unlocked a large coffer of chestnut-wood, and drew up from its depths a tarnished silver snuff-box. Within the snuff-box nestled a tiny leather pouch. The cura shook its contents into his left palm. Altogether there were eleven pieces of English gold, seven whole sovereigns and four halves. Such English pounds, *libras esterlinas*,

and 'half-pounds' were almost the sole gold currency in Portugal.

'I am going to lend you five pounds,' said the cura. 'If you can save enough to repay it while I am alive, so much the better. If you can do nothing till after I am dead, have Masses said for my soul. Here, take it, my son, and God bless you.'

So big a lump swelled in Antonio's throat that it was a long time before he could answer. At last he managed to utter his thanks and to declare stoutly that he would accept one pound only, to be repaid within the year. The cura grew angry, but the monk was firm. After much argument the dispute was ended by Antonio's accepting two half-pounds in English gold and a further half-pound in Portuguese *tostões* and *vintens*.*

By this time the sun was pouring down floods of fire from the heights of heaven. The cura closed the shutters and insisted that Antonio should rest on his bed till the fiercest heat should be passed. He himself descended to the living-room to say his Office and to indite the letter to the Oporto wine-merchants—an unfamiliar and formidable task, which was only achieved after two hours of grunting and groaning and ink-spilling and striding about.

Lying on the straw-stuffed bed, with his head on a hard pillow less than ten inches square, Antonio tried to recall all that had happened since the clink of steel cut short his reverie on the roof of the cloister. But out of

* The Portuguese *real* (plural *reis*) is an imaginary coin. Twenty *reis* make one *vintem* (plural *vintens*) the Portuguese penny. One hundred *reis*, or five *vintens* made one *tostão* (plural *tostões*). The large silver piece called *mil reis* (1000 *reis*) is nominally worth 4*s.* 5*d.*, but is practically a dollar.

forty-eight hours he had slept barely five. Drowsiness crept over him, and he fell asleep.

When he awoke and opened the shutters he knew by the sun that it must be about five o'clock in the afternoon. He hastened downstairs. A smell of salt fish and warmed-up beef and hot oil prepared him for the cura's pressing invitation to stay to dinner, which he gratefully and decisively refused.

At the presbytery door a handsome young peasant, goad in hand, was waiting alongside a pair of bullocks and a cart. The bullocks, fawn-coloured, with great soft eyes, had horns a yard long. The cart was of a type unchanged since the days of the Romans. The wheels were simply iron-bound discs of wood cut in one piece from the round trunks of big trees: the cart itself was stuck round with a dozen upright staves, to fence in the load.

Wringing his benefactor's hand for the seventh time and uttering a final word of gratitude, Antonio was about to begin his march when the peasant came forward to help him into the cart. It was vain to protest. The cura, who had never walked three continuous leagues in his life, laughed to scorn the monk's earnest declaration that he preferred to go afoot. The cart, he said, was hired and paid for as far as the nearest town, and he was not going to have a thousand reis thrown away.

There was nothing for it but obedience. The peasant had softened the rigours of the vehicle by flinging in a heap of heather and bracken: and as soon as his passenger was stretched full length on the greenery he made haste to rig up an awning on the poles. This consisted of one of the huge waterproofs, plaited from

reeds or grass, in which the Portuguese peasantry walk about on rainy days looking like animated Kaffir huts. The son of Saint Benedict winced at so much pampering: but the cura was not to be withstood.

As the bullocks began to slouch forward Antonio felt some kind of a package being thrust through the bars behind his head, while a rough voice muttered in his ear:

'*Adeus!* And pray to God for an old sinner!'

The peasant gently plied the goad, and the bullocks quickened their pace to about two miles an hour. Fortunately the road was deserted, and no one met or overtook the chariot. At the first turning Antonio's impulse to leap out and walk was nearly irresistible; but respect for the cura restrained him. Leaning on one elbow he opened his breviary and recited the remainder of the day's Office as far as the end of Vespers. This done, he could tolerate his position no longer. The jolting of the rigid cart over an ill-made and worse mended road, and the skriking of the uncoiled axle, he might have endured: but the snail's pace, and, worst of all, the feeling that he was like a fatted beast in the pen on the way to a fair, chafed him beyond bearing. So at sunset he descended, and, giving the driver one of his tostões, declared that he would complete the journey on foot. For five minutes the peasant obstinately insisted on marching with his passenger, cart and bullocks and all, as far as the town: but this the monk, fearful of being led to an inn where he would have to spend more tostões, would not allow. The peasant gave way at last; and, placing in Antonio's hand the packet which the cura had thrust between the bars of the cart, he wished him God-speed, and turned

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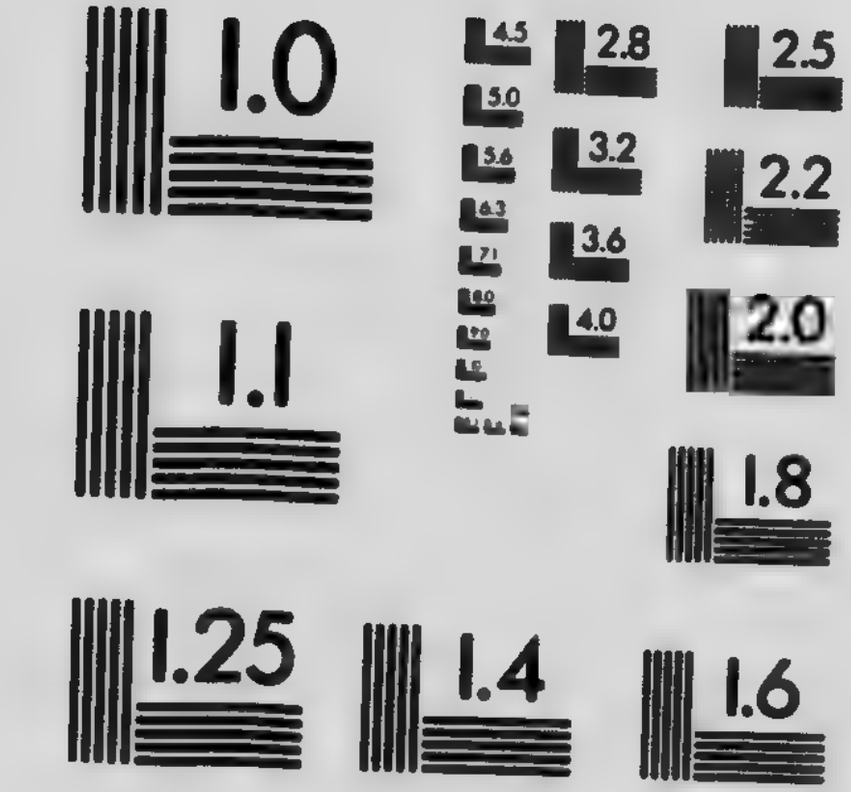

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his clumsy beasts and creaking machine back towards the south.

With legs half-paralysed by the cramping cart and sadly encumbered by his unfamiliar clothes, Antonio's first steps were like those of a drunken man. But he soon got into his stride and reached the town before the shops were closed. The felt sombrero which he bought amidst an increasing crowd of gaping idlers was the cheapest he could find: but it left him less change than he expected out of one of his half-pounds. Outside the shop a brown-eyed, bare-footed boy was waiting to guide the stranger to the inn; but Antonio gave him a vintem and pressed forward on his journey.

About an hour before midnight he reached a moss-grown aqueduct which supplied the water-wheel of a lonely orangery. Climbing the bank from which its clear spring gushed forth, the tired wayfarer sat down on the warm stones and opened the cura's package. It held a bottle of green wine, a loaf of rye bread, and some hunks of cold boiled beef; also, wrapped up in many wrappings, one more English pound.

Tears came into the monk's eyes. Throughout the griefs and partings of the two days just past he had been dry-eyed and calm: but this was beyond bearing. Mechanically holding open in his hand the book which it was too dark to read, he recited Compline, adding a heartfelt supplication for the cura's good estate. Then he ate a little of the dark bread, drank a few cool draughts from the hurrying spring, and lay down to sleep.

Before slumber had fully sealed his eyelids some sudden influence roused Antonio up. As plainly as if an angel's voice had spoken, he knew that in that mo-

ment the soul of the Abbot had passed to God. He arose and sank upon his knees, devoutly offering fervent prayers. Then he lay down once more, strangely filled with peace and with a feeling that all was well. He could not sleep; but he lay looking up into the violet heavens as though he half expected to see appearing in their highest heights a new bright star.

II

JUNE morn after June morn, June eve after June eve, Antonio steadily tramped towards Oporto. He usually rested in some grove or on the seashore from nightfall until dawn, and from about ten in the morning until four in the afternoon: but he was rarely on the march less than twelve hours a day.

Jealously guarding his little hoard he never spent a vintem that he could fairly save. For example, as he approached the mouth of the Mondego, he learned that the ferryman expected a pataco for the passage. A pataco is two vintens: so Antonio made a detour to the east and swam the stream at a lonely spot, pushing his clothes before him on a tiny raft of osiers. The cura's beef and bread and wine fed him for two days, and when they were consumed the monk lived on a tostão a day. His food was mainly dark bread; but he allowed himself, morning and evening, a small goat's-milk cheese and a draught of wine at a roadside tavern, for which he paid one pataco, or sometimes less. Once he caught two trout in a wayside stream, taking them with his hand from a pool as he had learned to do as a boy. A bit of a broken horseshoe and a flint enabled him to kindle a cook's fire in a little hollow.

In the plain to the west of Bussaco a farmer whom he overtook on the road from Coimbra gave him two days' work in his vineyard, for which he paid Antonio

five tostões and his board. Again, at Aveiro, a young canon who had surprised the monk conning his breviary in a dim corner of the insignificant cathedral, not only forced upon him a dinner and a night's lodging, but took him next morning aboard a kind of gondola which bore him along a Venetian-looking canal all the way to Ovar. From Ovar Antonio made a forced march of twenty miles; and that night he slept on sand, under pines, close to the mouth of the Douro. At daybreak he turned inland in time to see the first rays of the sun striking the tower of the Clérigos and the piled-up white houses of Oporto.

With the flashing Douro between himself and the city, he took out the cura's unsealed letter to the wine-merchant and read it for the twentieth time. The perusal strengthened his conviction that he could not present it. Throughout three pages the cura enlarged upon his young friend's troubles as an expelled monk: and this was not the light in which Antonio wished the employers of Oporto to regard him.

Descending into Villa Nova de Gaia, he was surprised and delighted to find that he was already among the warehouses and caves of the more famous wine-merchants, and that he did not need to cross the bridge of boats in order to begin his search for employment. But as it was still too early for the magnates to have reached their bureaux, he determined to hear Mass. On a height above him rose a fine domed church, and thither he climbed. Antonio did not know that he was gazing upon the famous Augustinian convent of Nossa Senhora da Serra do Pilar, whence the Duke of Wellington, helped by monks, had made his wonderful dash across the Douro five-and-thirty years before; nor did

he know that less than two years had passed since the gallant Liberal Marquis Sá da Bandeira had held the same spot against heavy Miguelista odds. What engrossed Antonio was the confusion, which shewed that this convent was faring little better than his own abbey and that the Augustinians were faring no better than the Benedictines. He waited for Mass in vain.

Dropping down again into Gaia he bought a piece of bread and turned into a tavern for a short rest and a draught of wine. When the tavern-keeper was inquisitive Antonio candidly stated that he had come to Gaia to look for employment. The tavern-keeper shook his head.

'Your worship has come at the wrong time,' he said. And he went on to tell how one of the French soldiers of fortune, who had been hired for the siege, had wantonly destroyed nine thousand pipes of wine in a single warehouse. The port-wine trade, he said, was all at sixes and sevens.

A little daunted, Antonio arose at last and made his way to the first of the warehouses. Like many others which he visited in the course of the day, it was protected by a small representation of the Union Jack, painted correctly in red, white, and blue, and superscribed, 'British Property.' An English foreman barred Antonio's way to the office with a surly announcement that the manager had not arrived, and that in no case were new hands required. At the second warehouse he was less curtly but no more usefully answered. At the third and fourth he was denied admittance. At the fifth he would have been given a temporary post had he been able to speak English : but the monk could only

read and write it. At the eleventh and last he was told that he might apply again in a week's time.

With weary limbs and a wearier heart the wanderer crossed the bridge of boats in the blaze of the June afternoon and toiled up the hill to the cathedral. In the granite cloisters, face to face with some unchurchly azulejos depicting scenes from the Song of Solomon, he sat with closed eyes until the heat was passed. Then he descended one hill and ascended another in search of the great Benedictine monastery. He found the community still in possession: but an inward voice forbade him to make himself known and he turned sadly away.

Many broken windows and a few wrecked houses reminded Antonio of the siege so lately ended; but, on the whole, he was surprised to see so few signs of the strife. The streets were full of bullock-carts, fish-wives, and busy people of all sorts, and the river was alive with shipping. Amidst so much activity surely the morrow would find a post for him to fill. He plucked up heart and set about securing a cheap lodging. Happily the first he inspected met his needs. For six tostões a week he hired a narrow room over a cobbler's, with the right to use the cobbler's wife's fire twice a day.

In order that he might pick up the manners and speech of the world, Antonio dined that night in a quay-side eating-house. Throughout the meal he heard little more than a loud conversation between a Norwegian captain and his mate: but while he was lingering at the table, lamenting the wasting of twelve vintens, three or four Portuguese entered and sat down at the table of the departing Norwegians. In audible tones they continued a debate in which they were

engaged on the suppression of the religious orders. They were coarsened men, whose language was one-fourth oaths.

As one monstrous slander after another was uttered against his brethren, Antonio's blood began to boil within him. Very little more would have overborne his self-control: but suddenly a black-moustached man with the Lisbon accent, who had taken a minor part in the argument, rapped the table and made himself heard.

'Monks and friars are wastrels and loafers,' he began, 'but the men who're turning them out are ten times worse. Listen to me. I'll tell your Worships what everybody was talking about in Lisbon the day before yesterday, when I came away.'

Through the waiter setting down the new-comers' plates with a noisy rattle, Antonio lost most of the next sentence: but, with a start of surprise, he caught the name of his own abbey.

'It's only a little abbey,' continued the man from Lisbon, 'and nobody guessed it was so rich. But it seems the monks had got stuff worth a hundred thousand pounds. They had dozens of golden cups all covered over with diamonds as big as pigeons' eggs, and a lot of pictures by the famous Italian painter Raphael.

'Your Worships have heard of our new Viscount, the Viscount of Ponte Quebrada. He comes from Amsterdam, or London, or Frankfort—it doesn't matter which. He's a Jew, or an atheist, or a Protestant—it's all the same thing. The Government has made him a Viscount because he found money last year. For every thirty English pounds he brought, Portugal

has to pay back a hundred, and the interest as well. So he's been made a Viscount.'

'We're not Miguelistas here,' growled one of the company. But the Lisbon man ignored him and went on:

'Somehow the Viscount of Ponte Quebrada got wind of the diamond cups. He went off himself with the troopers, so that he could lay hold of them for himself. I know exactly what happened. My brother employs a man whose cousin was one of the soldiers. When the Viscount demanded possession of the monastery, the monks insisted that he should give receipts for all the pictures and cups. There was a terrible quarrel. Then the Viscount tried to steal the things in the night. But he was caught. The next morning it turned out that the Prior was really a general, and that he had been second in command to the famous Wellington. He threw off his monk's dress before all the soldiers and stood up in full uniform, and offered to fight the Viscount either with swords or pistols. Then the Viscount signed the receipts.

'As soon as the monks had passed out of the gates, the Abbot, who was nearly a hundred years old, dropped down dead from the excitement. When they buried him, at a place called Navares, there was nearly a riot against the Government.'

'I tell you, we are not against the Government here,' gruffed out the Oporto man with increasing resentment. But the Lisbon man ignored him again.

'The Viscount sent all the soldiers to this place Navares, to put the riot down. Then he pretended to be afraid that the Prior was going to make a dash back for the diamond cups: so he pretended to bury them

in the woods, and sent an express to the Government to come with half a regiment and carry the stuff safely to Lisbon. The Government sent fifty more soldiers: but, when the Viscount took them to the place in the woods, all they found was an empty hole.'

Even the Oporto Liberal whistled his surprise. Antonio, bending forward unconsciously, strained his ears to catch every word.

'They say,' concluded the man from Lisbon, 'that no play-actor in the world could have done better than the Viscount. When he saw the empty hole he threw up his hands and began raving like a madman, and tore his hair. But nobody is taken in. He has stormed and raged and threatened: but Lisbon's too hot for him, and he's taken himself off on an English packet.'

'And the diamond cups?' demanded two voices at once.

'Don't ask me,' chuckled the man from Lisbon. 'Ask the Viscount of Ponte Quebrada. After all, what does it matter? Portugal has been robbed a thousand times before, and this is simply the thousand and first. As I've said already, friars and monks are loafers and wastrels; but they're being driven out by knaves and thieves.'

"The whole tale's a pack of lies!' roared the Oporto Liberal. And, rising up, he banged the table with his fist until the wine leapt out of the glasses.

The Lisbon man, who had told his tale in bantering, almost jovial tones, sprang up in his turn and blazed out with a brace of lurid oaths. In a moment the whole place was in an uproar and things looked ugly for the Southerner. But just as the first blow was about to be struck Antonio leapt between the combatants.

'Senhores,' he cried, 'the whole tale is not a pack of lies. I used to work for that old Abbot in the monks' vineyards. It is true that the Viscount of Ponte Quebrada tried to seize the abbey's treasures for himself.'

For two or three seconds everybody stared at Antonio in speechless surprise. Then the din of angry voices broke out louder than ever. The tavern-keeper bawled out commands which no one heeded, while threats and curses filled the air. From other tables excited men came hurrying to the fray.

Antonio saw that the odds were a dozen to two: so he gripped the man from Lisbon by the shoulders and half shoved, half swung him to the open door and into the safety of the street. And, in spite of being well cursed and hustled for his pains, he did not relax his hold until they had gained a dim and quiet alley.

When Antonio said good-night and would have turned homeward, the Southerner had the grace and sense to know that a service had been rendered to him. Rather sulkily he grunted:

'Stop. One moment. You meant well. Who are you?'

'My name,' answered the monk, 'is Francisco Manoel Oliveira da Rocha.' It was Antonio's true name, but from long disuse it came haltingly from his lips.

'What are you doing in Oporto?'

'Looking for work,' said Antonio. 'I only arrived this morning. Perhaps I shall have better luck to-morrow. In Gaia the wine-merchants do not want hands.'

'That's all stuff and nonsense!' snorted the man from Lisbon. 'They want a man badly at the cellars of Castro and de Mattos.'

Antonio explained that he had approached the Senhores Castro and de Mattos and had been turned out.

'Meet me outside their offices at nine to-morrow morning,' said the stranger, 'and they'll let you in.'

III

Not only the next morning, but also on hundreds of mornings following, Castros' and de Mattos' doors opened to Antonio. Somewhat straightened financially, Senhor Castro, the only surviving partner, was coquetting with a rich English wine-merchant who wished to acquire a direct interest in an Oporto wine-lodge of repute. The negotiations demanded an exact stock-taking, and to this end Antonio was engaged for three months at a wage of four milreis a week.

The hours were long and the work was heavy Two porters were at his disposal; but Antonio had often to put his own shoulder to the shifting of a cask. As for the brain-work it was harder than the manual. Following Portuguese custom the Castro wines had been reckoned by weight; and it was the young monk's duty to work out difficult sums in weights and measures, transmuting the awkward Portuguese almudes into equally awkward English tuns and hogsheads.

On the last day of July, more than four weeks before anybody expected the work to be finished, Antonio placed a neatly-written summary in his employer's hands. Senhor Castro was delighted. Not only was he able to resume his negotiations a month earlier than he had hoped, but his losses during the siege proved to be less than he had feared. Recalling the strenuous Antonio to his private room he renewed his engagement,

and entrusted him with important duties far up the Douro, where the Castro vineyards lay.

Throughout a torrid August, in a profound gorge where the quivering heat abode like fiery vapours in a crater, Antonio laboured on, tightening the lax Castro discipline and overhauling the muddled organisation. Before the feast of Saint Michael and All Angels the vintage was over, and an unusual quantity of good wine had been pressed with exceptional care. The monk returned to Oporto in a wine-boat, and his voyage was not without excitements. Here swirling through a deep ravine, there spreading over wide shallows, the Douro kept its navigators ever on the alert. Once, at sunrise, a barque which was outstripping Antonio's came to grief. Two hogsheads of wine smashed like egg-shells against a jagged reef of slate, and the chocolate-coloured water was empurpled with the spilt blood of the vine.

On reporting himself to Senhor Castro Antonio found his hours shortened, his importance heightened, and his salary raised to twenty-five milreis a month. But he did not abandon his cheap lodging over the cobbler's shop nor did he soften the austerities of his life. By the beginning of October, continued self-denial enabled him to send to the old cura five English pounds in return for the clothes and money which had started the monk on his secular career.

Antonio's were strenuous days. In the cellar and in the counting-house he gave his whole body and mind to his work. Yet he performed every day the Work of God. Soon after the disappearance of his Benedictine brethren from their convent in Oporto, he saw in a poor shop a complete monastic breviary which he bought for a few coppers. Every morning, week-day and

Sunday, he heard Mass, and every day he recited the whole of the Divine Office. And over and above all this he found time for perfecting himself in spoken and written English. A swim and a long tramp on a Sunday, followed by a meal in a tavern, were his sole pleasures; and his Sunday evenings were cheerfully sacrificed to the needs of Oporto's poor and illiterate Gallegos, or Spanish porters from Galicia, whose letters to their friends at home were often written by Antonio's pen.

At the Whitsuntide holidays he would tramp off to the shrine of Bom Jesus, or Our Lord of the Mount, on a hill overlooking the primatial city of Braga. There he would eat the penny stews and halfpenny loaves, cooked for the pilgrims in the great hill-side ovens, and after a farthing draught of wine he would lie down to sleep in the open air.

After three years of this kind of life, in which each new week was almost a replica of the week before, Antonio found himself with a hundred English pounds. He had saved it by laying vintem on vintem, milreis on milreis. But he needed two hundred for the execution of his plan. The dreary prospect of three more grinding years, during which his opportunity might vanish away, suddenly dismayed him; and, falling on his knees in the ancient little church of Cedofeita, he desperately challenged heaven to make haste.

Two hours later Senhor Castro summoned the young man to his presence. He said that the quickly-waxing repute of the firm's ports in England had led to a large order for the cellars of the English king. His London partner, he added, was rising to the occasion, and had already chartered a small ship for the transport of the juice. The idea was that no one outside the firm's own

staff should handle the wine throughout its voyage from the Castro warehouses to King William's cellars. Senhor Castro concluded by asking Antonio to take entire charge of the affair. Nothing was said about an increase in his salary, but he was to receive a special allowance of four pounds a week for travelling expenses from the moment of dropping anchor in the Thames until he landed again in Oporto.

Antonio thanked his employer warmly; but the secret places of the monk's heart were loud with still warmer thanks to his Lord. He swiftly reckoned that the journey would increase his little hoard by not less than thirty pounds. Besides, he would see England in the full beauty of her famous spring and summer. He would tread the pavements of the greatest city in the world. Best of all he would hear and speak nothing but the English tongue which he had worked so hard to master.

As he walked out of the chief's office and gazed across the familiar river to the blinding whiteness of Oporto, Antonio suddenly realised that his good fortune had not befallen him a day too soon. During his daily, weekly, monthly plodding at a routine of dogged overwork he had not perceived that he was drawing away his reserves of health and courage. But, all in a moment, the unutterable staleness of his duties and surroundings sickened him. He shrank back from the torrid glare into a patch of shade and gasped greedily for air, like a newly-caught fish. Until he recovered self-control it seemed impossible to wait another moment for the waters and fresh breezes of the Atlantic, and for the green meadows and cool glades of England.

Ten mornings later the *Queen of the Medway*, with

Antonio and his precious pipes of port on board, dropped down the Douro on a strong ebb-tide. A gentle wind blew favourably from the south, and before sunset the schooner had lost sight of Monte Luzia, the holy hill which watches over the towers and roofs of Vianna do Castello. As the last lights faded Antonio almost made out through the captain's glasses the mouth of the little river which divides Portugal from Spain. At daybreak the wind freshened and the monk, climbing the ladder with difficulty, peeped out at the arid peaks of Galicia. His next three days were less happy, for the Bay of Biscay was not in one of its softer moods.

Turning round Ushant, the *Queen of the Medway* swam as gently as a swan into summer seas. The wind, after veering round to the west, had weakened into the softest of zephyrs, so that the log during the voyage up Channel never shewed more than fifty knots a day. But Antonio inwardly gave thanks. At the first sight of Brittany his sea-sickness ceased. He began to eat like a hunter and to sleep like a log. In his portmanteau were English books and a grammar; but, outside the Divine Office, he did not read a word. For nine or ten hours a day he lay full-length on the deck, basking in the temperate sunshine while the immense tranquillity of sky and sea healed his nerves, and the soft air brought back colour to his cheeks and light to his eyes.

The snow-white precipices of the English coast, and especially Shakespeare's Cliff, were so unlike anything he had ever seen before that they would have stirred Antonio even if there had been nothing within him of the poet and the student. But as they gave place to the flat beaches of Whitstable and the earth-banks of Sheppey he forgot the white walls in his eagerness to

see the wonders they guarded. With the rosy breaking of the sixteenth day of the voyage he was already on the deck scanning the banks of the Thames. The chill landscape looked un-English and reminded him of Dutch pictures.

As day broadened the Thames narrowed. Many ships, great and small, came closer to the *Queen of the Medway* as she moved forward with the flowing tide. Suddenly a frigate, pushing seaward against the stream, set the Thames on fire with curiosity. Her flag was flying at half-mast. A minute later the incoming craft had read her signals. King William was dead.

The captain, the mate, and Antonio uncovered; and, rather tardily, the crew did the same. A big East Indiaman, just ahead, began firing signal-guns in an aimless way, while a small collier half-masted a grimy Union Jack of incorrect design. If all the ships' companies were like the crew of the *Queen of the Medway*, there was much less grief than excitement. Even Antonio, who immediately went below with a troubled face, was selfish in his regrets. Now King William was dead, would the new King take the pipes of port?

Mr. Austin Crowberry, Senhor Castro's London partner, was not at the wharf when the *Queen of the Medway* made fast. But Antonio had no trouble. As the cargo was wholly for the King it was not subject to customs-duties, and the formalities were completed in a few moments. Indeed, one high official of the Excise was so anxious to be obliging that he strove hard to carry Antonio off to dine at a famous tavern.

When Mr. Crowberry arrived at last it was evident that he had been honouring the Castro juices with his active patronage. He recognised Antonio, whom he

had seen twice in Gaia, and shook him so warmly by the hand that it was no longer possible to doubt his exhilarated condition. He would have drunk two bottles more in the captain's cabin if Antonio had not schemed to shew him an empty cupboard. Very soon he lost his temper and launched into imprudent and disloyal grumblings. The House of Hanover, he said, was a house of spendthrifts and madmen. Who but a madman, he demanded of Antonio point-blank, would go and die on the very eve of filling his cellar with Waterloo port? And who was this chit Victoria? She was a slip of a wench nobody had ever heard of. He wound up by thanking his stars that he had only one child, seeing that the country could not possibly last another ten years.

Like the gorgeous officer of the Excise, Mr. Austin Crowberry tried his best to drag Antonio away to a tavern. But the monk stood firm. Until some officer of the royal household should take the cargo off his hands, not Senhor Castro himself could have induced him to leave the *Queen of the Medway* for a moment. His quarters were narrow, the dock was malodorous: but Antonio stuck to his post.

IV

UNDER a heat which amazed Antonio the quays and the dock became more unsavoury every day: but he did not quit the *Queen of the Medway*. His friend the Excise officer agreed with Mr. Crowberry that decency required patient waiting until after the King's funeral. Meanwhile, however, the dock charges and other expenses were running on. Accordingly, Antonio drafted a discreet and respectful letter to the comptroller of the royal cellars, asking him to affix seals to a small bonded warehouse in which the wine could await his convenience. Mr. Crowberry admired and signed the letter and despatched it through a privileged middleman. The comptroller's people accepted the proposal with surprising alacrity; and within a week of his reaching London the cargo lay safely under lock and seal and Antonio was free.

Through pure thoughtlessness Mr. Crowberry recommended Antonio to a hostelry where his expenses were a pound a day. After one night's stay he quitted these noisy and expensive quarters for a modest lodging within sight of green fields, up Tottenham Court Road. At first English habits upset him. He tried both beer and porter, and could not decide which was the more undesirable. The clarets, and even the ports, which he tasted at Mr. Crowberry's were heavy and all wrong. The saddles of mutton, the sirloins of beef and the boiled

salmon were supremely excellent: but, on the whole, Antonio could not divine why the wealthy and table-loving English fed so unwisely and so unwell.

Mingling with a good-humoured Cockney crowd, who made room for 'the Dago,' Antonio saw the funeral procession of the King. He found the state-coaches much inferior to those he had seen in Lisbon: but the military pageant was beyond everything he had imagined. His chief thrill, however, went through him at the sight of the Duke of Wellington, whom a young Cockney, with vague notions concerning the Peninsular War, pointed out to Antonio as 'the good old Djook wot beat yer 'oller.' Antonio was much more deeply moved by the figure of the veteran warrior than by the gorgeously empalled royal coffin. He had heard many an evil word against the Iron Duke and against the cynical selfishness of England in making poor Portugal her cat's paw under a guise of magnanimity: but he instinctively uncovered as the grand old soldier rode by.

A more indefatigable sightseer than Antonio never descended upon the monuments and public collections of London. He saw every notable object once, and the worthier sights many times over. The pictures overpowered him. As for the churches, he entered every one of the few that were open: but Wren's buildings to Antonio, like Lisbon's churches to an Englishman, seemed nearly all alike.

He heard Mass every morning at the lumbering Sardinian Chapel, near Lincoln's Inn Fields. He also visited the new Catholic church called St. Mary Moorfields, of which the London Papists were immensely proud: but he thought it poor and small. Now and again he attended, without assisting *in sacris*, some

Protestant services. At the first of them he heard a City incumbent harangue a somnolent congregation of twelve against the idolatrous practice of setting up images in churches: but Antonio was more bewildered than edified, because the very small communion-table was overtopped by a very large image of a lion assisting a very large image of a unicorn to sustain the royal arms. In the too bare Saint Paul's Cathedral and the too much encumbered Westminster Abbey he heard organ-playing and anthem-singing beautiful beyond his dreams: but he could not understand why the Church of England should have renounced the Mass while lavishing pains and money on two fragments of the Divine Office. Again, one Sunday night, at Wesley's Chapel in City Road, Antonio heard so sound a sermon on repentance and restitution that his heart grew warm with thankfulness until the preacher took a sudden hop, skip, and jump into a confused doctrine of Justification which made God less just than man.

A week after the King's obsequies Antonio waited on Mr. Crowberry to remind him that the comptroller of the Queen's cellars had made no sign. Mr. Crowberry, fearful of giving offence, was for indefinite waiting: but Antonio at last obtained leave to bring the matter to a head on the ground that he wished to supervise the bottling before returning to Portugal. The comptroller's secretary received the young Portuguese with courtesy: but he had nothing satisfactory to say.

One morning, when the hourly thought of his inaction, at an extra cost to the Castro firm of four pounds a week, had begun to corrode his self-respect, the Portuguese called on the comptroller again and pressed him to name a date.

'I am glad you have called,' said the great man. 'I could not write what I am about to say. Will it derange the firm of Castro if I cancel the order?'

Antonio started.

'I should add,' the comptroller continued, 'that in no case can I accept, or pay for, these wines for a considerable time. You have heard, no doubt, that the administration of the Privy Purse and of the royal household has not been, in all points, wholly satisfactory.'

Antonio turned very pale. Had he, by his headstrong importunity, annoyed the firm's most distinguished customer and done irreparable harm? It seemed so. But a moment later a plan flashed into his mind.

'If I could have a letter,' he said, rising, 'to say that owing to His Majesty's death no more wine can be received at present, and that we are free to sell our shipment elsewhere, I think Mr. Crowberry will write at once relieving your Excellency of further anxiety in the matter.'

The comptroller purred with pleasure at Antonio's 'Excellency,' a word which he had only heard applied to the persons of ambassadors. He thanked Antonio and shewed him out graciously. The next day Mr. Crowberry was reading such a letter as his assistant had asked for.

Antonio, entering the Jermyn Street office as his chief was ending the perusal, noted with concern that there had been another bout of drinking. Suddenly Mr. Crowberry, flaming with rage, dashed the letter down on his desk and exploded like a shell. His fearful threats flew out like red-hot nails and the air seemed sulphurous with his blasphemies. His nouns and verbs

were few, and the solid matter of his discourse could hardly be discerned through the lurid vapours of his cursings. He swore that, although he had been True Blue all his life, he would straightway turn Republican. Concerning the comptroller he was contradictory, first vowing that he would see him burning in hell before he would excuse him from receiving a single bottle, and then declaring that he would pour every drop of the liquor down the cur's throat. He added a rude expression about the young Queen, whereupon Antonio intervened.

'All this is my doing,' he said. 'I asked the comptroller yesterday to write this letter.'

Mr. Crowberry swung round and faced him in speechless astonishment.

'He told me flatly that he could neither receive nor pay for our wine for a very long time,' Antonio explained. 'He asked us to release him from the bargain. At first I was aghast. But a plan occurred to me. Perhaps I did wrong——'

'Wrong?' roared Mr. Crowberry. 'Wrong?' And he hurled out half a dozen fresh oaths. 'I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Rocha,' he bellowed. 'You're a [——] upstart, and it was a damned bad day for everybody when that silly old idiot Castro picked you up out of the gutter.'

'Mr. Austin Crowberry,' flashed back Antonio in tones as sharp as knives, 'you will be good enough not to insult me. If we begin comparing pedigrees it will not be to your advantage.'

'Pssh!' sneered the other, 'you remind me of the [——] Irish. Every drunken Paddy you meet is descended from a king. I never met a foreigner yet who

didn't turn out to be a count or a marquis. Pah! Shut up. You make me sick.'

A tremendous effort enabled Antonio to hold his tongue and to move towards the door. But this silent move only served to drive his employer mad.

'So this letter is your doing?' he roared, flinging himself with his back against the door-handle.

'I thought——' Antonio began.

'Thought? You thought? Who are you to begin thinking? For two pins I'd give you a damned good hiding.'

Antonio's face became as white as a sheet. There was no longer a monk in the room: only a man. He faced his employer with eyes which made him quail. But he did not lose his head. Suddenly he wheeled round and drew from a brass bowl on the table two of the tiny pins which were used to attach measures to letters.

'Here are your two pins, Senhor,' he said, flinging them with infinite scorn at Crowberry's feet. 'Now give me my damned good hiding.'

He fell back two paces with his left arm raised in guard and his right fist clenched to return blow for blow. But Mr. Crowberry did not take up the challenge. He blenched; blinked; gasped; smirked; edged away; and finally blurted out peevishly:

'Leave the room. Go out of my office at once.'

Antonio brushed him aside and stepped into the street. His heart was still hot with anger, and he still smarted under the insults. With long strides he hastened mechanically along Piccadilly towards Apsley House, which had come to be his favourite walk. But he had hardly reached the old French Embassy when

there was a turmoil behind him, and voices crying 'Stop!' He turned round and saw Mr. Crowberry's office-boy and one of the junior clerks.

'Mr. Crowb'ry, 'e ses will yer come back at once.'

'Did Mr. Crowberry say nothing else?'

'No, sir.'

'Tell Mr. Crowberry I shall be in Hyde Park, just inside the arch beyond the palace of the Duke of Wellington. I shall not wait longer than twelve o'clock.'

At five minutes before noon Mr. Crowberry dashed into the Park upon a bony bay hack, hurriedly hired at the nearest mews. The ride had sobered him: and, at the sight of his honest shamefacedness, Antonio's wrath and pride broke down into love and pity. He helped his chief to alight: and at the mere touch of hands both men knew that they were reconciled.

'It was brandy,' said Crowberry very humbly.

'I'm glad to hear it,' Antonio answered. 'If I thought it was wine I'd never help to make or sell another drop as long as I live.'

'Of course I apologise,' added the merchant awkwardly.

'It's all over and done with,' said Antonio. 'Let us forget it and speak of other matters.'

'Quite so,' agreed Crowberry. 'But there's just one point. Don't offer to fight me when I'm sober. English fists strike hard.'

'And there's just one point more,' retorted Antonio genially but with conviction, 'Don't offer to fight me when I'm drunk. Portuguese fists strike harder. Now let me tell you my plan.'

Mr. Crowberry insisted that the plan should not be unfolded until they were sitting at meat in his club;

and, on the clear understanding that nothing should be drunk beyond a bottle of Bordeaux and some soda-water, Antonio accepted the invitation.

Across a thoroughly English leg of lamb, with green peas, new potatoes and mint sauce, Antonio expounded his designs. He started from the fact that Royalty's house-managers were treating the firm of Castro with thorough-going selfishness. He went on to say that when kings and queens, with incomes of half a million pounds a year, were unscrupulous in guarding their own convenience, it was high time that Senhor Castro who had only been lifted out of imminent bankruptcy by the strong hand of Mr. Crowberry, should obtain his just due.

Mr. Crowberry agreed, and added a disloyal observation.

'But we shall make nothing of the comptroller,' Antonio continued. 'I find it is your law that the Queen can do no wrong. Her Majesty cannot be sued. Even if she could, it would be madness to try it. No. Here is my plan. We will let the comptroller off with a mere trifle—say, a hundred dozen. Then we will sell the bulk of the stuff to your nobility and gentry at a high price, on the strength of our having brought it over in a specially chartered vessel for the King, whose untimely decease has deranged the transaction.'

Mr. Crowberry's face clouded. He had hoped to hear a less distasteful proposition. 'I am not a Cheap Jack,' he said a little stiffly.

'You misunderstand me,' said Antonio, flushing. 'I should hate puffing and touting as much as anybody. We won't print or even write a single line. We will go in person to your best clients and will offer them not

more than fifty dozens each as a great favour. We will shew them the original order and the comptroller's letter. The news will spread; and we shall get back all our outlay and collect most of our profit six months earlier than we should get a penny from the Queen.'

Senhor Castro's partner tilted back his heavy chair on its hind legs and knitted his brows. At last he said:

'You are right. We've been badly treated. We must look after Number One. Besides, Castro needs the money, and I'm not going to lend the firm any more. As you say, it can be done with discretion and dignity. To-morrow I'll give you a list of likely people. You shall start at once.'

Antonio, however, insisted that Mr. Crowberry should pilot him to the first half-dozen clients. Except Mr. Crowberry's own establishment, where a lax housekeeper looked very badly after the widower and his son, the monk had never entered a private house in England, and he called it unreasonable to send him on so delicate an errand alone.

With a wry face Mr. Crowberry gave in. The same afternoon the comptroller accepted his hundred dozens, and kindly wrote a further letter giving the house of Castro leave to do as they pleased with the remainder of their own property. And by the evening of the following day the odd pair of commercial travellers had sold nearly a thousand pounds' worth of wine. In five houses out of six their visit was received with gushing gratitude. To possess the Castro port seemed to fire the knights' and baronets' imaginations; not because it was the magnificent remnant of an unparalleled vintage but because it had narrowly escaped being drunk by a king.

So delighted was the volatile Crowberry with his experiences that he swung right round and announced that he would accompany Antonio on a fortnight's tour through the Home and Midland counties. He hired a roomy and well-hung post-chaise, loaded it with ten dozen bottles as samples, and was out of London within thirty hours of broaching the scheme.

After the smells and smoke and uproar of London the fair English country was like paradise to Antonio. He knew the beautiful Minho of Portugal: but this England was more beautiful still. Once, as they rolled through a village in Bucks, the gracious loveliness of the scene almost broke his heart. The mellow beams of the setting sun were softly caressing the square tower of the church and glorifying the solemn old yews which girt it round. Over all, the motionless, gilded weather-cock burned like a flame in a high wind. Children were shouting and playing outside white cottages half hidden under red roses. Up to their knees in murmuring water beside a steep grey bridge, dreamy-eyed cattle swished their tails and chewed their cud. The bright green meadows were enamelled with myriads of white and pink and blue and yellow flowers, and the wanton hedgerows wore long streamers of convolvulus and honeysuckle. High in the giant elms rooks cawed steadily with a raucous but homely sound.

'Never mind,' chaffed Mr. Crowberry, 'you'll see her again soon.'

'Her?' echoed Antonio, starting.

'Yes. Her. Teresa or Dolores or Maria or Luiza or Carmen. Don't be down in the dumps. You'll see her again before long.'

'I think not,' said Antonio. But he winced as he

realised how nearly the wine-merchant had interpreted his mood. The children's cries, the curling smoke of the homesteads, all the sweet sights and sounds of the village, had awakened in him a vague sense of his loveless and loneliness. He was glad when, half an hour later, they reached their inn: and before he surrendered himself to imperious sleep he knelt for a long, long time beside the great mahogany bed and prayed as he had not prayed for many a day.

V

ALTOGETHER, Mr. Crowberry and Antonio sold six thousand pounds' worth of wine. In only three out of the seven-and-forty houses they visited was their reception suspicious or cool. Indeed, their errand was so acceptable that they rarely slept or dined at an inn.

Antonio had heard much of English wealth and luxury: but the solid comfort and daily lavishness amazed him. Often on the well-kept roads he would encounter a dashing equipage drawn by high-stepping slender greys and followed by a pack of spotted Dalmatian dogs. Sometimes he got more than a glimpse of rigid, expressionless footmen, powdered and gorgeously apparelled, and of bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked ladies in high-waisted dresses and with plumes nodding over their pretty heads. Nor did his post-chaise ever bowl many miles without passing some ivied castle or stately home.

At the squires' and lords' tables Antonio was a success. He rarely spoke until he was addressed: but such remarks as he made were all sensible and interesting, and his foreign accent made them piquant to hear. At every meal the talk turned sooner or later to the townsmen's agitation for abolishing the Corn Laws and for fostering industrialism at all costs until England became the workshop of the world. In his rôle of the Intelligent Foreigner Antonio was generally asked his

opinion. He would reply that no nation could be enduringly healthy and wealthy unless the majority of her children nourished themselves directly from Mother Earth; and although this way of putting it rather bewildered his hosts, Antonio's practical conclusion in favour of agriculture was always applauded.

Too often for the monk's ease the table-talk turned to religion. The English notables took it for granted that, as an Intelligent Foreigner, Antonio must be a French sceptic. They hated atheism less than Popery; and although most of them were church-going men, they would have preferred that Antonio should believe nothing at all to his believing in the Christian religion plus the Pope. On such occasions Antonio always strained his wits to turn the subject: but whenever his host or a fellow-guest had the bad taste to be persistent he would reply with spirit that Rome was no more intolerant to Protestantism than Canterbury was to Dissent; that perfunctory and greedy priests were no more common than perfunctory and greedy parsons; and that the essential truths of revealed religion were far more widely and firmly believed in Portugal than in England. Once or twice a fellow-diner, who had heard of the suppression of the monasteries, would launch a jest or a sneer against monks: whereupon Antonio would boldly answer:

'They were good men. I made wine for years in an abbey vineyard, and I ought to know.'

Once, strangely enough, Antonio and Mr. Crowberry ate a lugubrious luncheon in the house of a poor and proud Catholic family who had kept the faith, with occasional lapses, through the three centuries of persecution. But intermarriage and isolation had done

them no good. When Mr. Crowberry introduced his lieutenant as a fellow-believer they responded uneasily. They seemed to be without a trace of the missionary spirit, and to look with alarm upon the incipient revival of Catholicism lest the mob should shout out for new penal laws. An extremely aged French priest, a refugee from the Terror, was their chaplain ; and all they wished was to be left alone in a tiny Popish enclave among the surrounding Protestantism.

In the long run, however, Antonio could not judge them harshly. Five or six of the great houses he visited were called This or That Abbey, or The Other Priory, and their spacious halls had been the refectories or chapter-houses of religious orders. Often a mouldering arch or a traceried window of the monks' church had been conserved for its picturesqueness : and as Antonio lingered among these holy relics he could understand the negation of the Papacy and the denunciation of monasticism on which the Tudor aristocrats founded their fortunes and builded their houses. Early one morning, as he stood beside a broken pillar which alone survived to mark the site of one of the most renowned monasteries in Britain, his heart sank at the thought of his own white chapel, fronting the Atlantic storms all neglected and forsaken. If, after three hundred years, no one had restored these waste places of Zion in England, how could he hope, single-handed, to do better in Portugal ? But he remembered with joy the essential difference. Portugal had torn a limb from the Church : but she had not lost the Faith.

Amidst this whirl of distractions Antonio was secretly living his religious life with unwonted fervour. Not only did he recite the Office with close attention but he

lost no opportunity of fighting on the angels' side. As the acknowledged expert of the company he told the truth emphatically about spirits, and even preached up French clarets as against the Englishman's favourite liquored port. At first these opinions disconcerted Mr. Crowberry: but, at the second hearing, he took Antonio on one side and astonished him by saying that it was the cleverest move he had ever seen in his life. Antonio, however, could endure this cynical misjudgment: for he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had frightened at least one brandy-sot out of his ugly and suicidal habit.

It was at the dinner-table of an earl that the monk perceived most sharply the contrast between his inward and his outward life. While he was donning in his room the fine clothes with which Mr. Crowberry had equipped him for the journey, he had been suddenly filled with such a sense of God's love and presence as he had never known before. Throughout the lively dinner, although he took his due part in conversation, this ecstasy endured. He seemed to be two persons in one body. Across the table he could see himself reflected in the bevelled mirror of a vast mahogany sideboard. At closer quarters the mirror reflected the butler solemnly pouring champagne into tall French flutes of purest silver. In the back of the picture, brilliantly lit by many candles, Antonio could see his own reflection. He thought of the Antonio in flapping clothes who had lived for weeks in Oporto on salt fish and dark bread so that he might repay the cura's loan, and he compared him with the new Antonio, in broadcloth and fine linen. On his left sat the earl's niece, a magnificent young dame with a rope of pearls round

her neck and a diamond tiara in her hair. According to a custom of Puritan England, which has always bewildered visitors from less prudish countries, she was dining in a kind of ball-dress which revealed arms and shoulders as white and shapely as a statue's. All the themes of the talk were of the world, worldly: but Antonio's whole heart remained in heaven.

Not that he was always indifferent to the charms and graces of beautiful women. On the contrary, he was generally at his best in their presence. And women, in their turn, were enchanted with Antonio. Indeed, one self-willed beauty concealed so little of her admiration for the handsome and courtly Southerner that during a tour of the greenhouses she plucked a flower which he had admired and placed it in his hand. Her look, as she did so, had meanings: but Antonio was not a gawk, and he received the keepsake with such easy tact that the affair would have ended had not the inquisitive Crowberry caught the lady's eye. From that day forward he hardly ceased rallying Antonio on his conquest. Having heard that, in Portugal, a commoner shares the title of the Duchess he marries, Mr. Crowberry began to call Antonio 'Your Grace' and to paint lurid pictures of the frightful revenge shortly to be wreaked by Antonio's jilted Teresa.

On returning to London and to the Jermyn Street office Mr. Crowberry found that the news of his offer had spread, and that orders had arrived by post which would exhaust the whole shipment of wine. A little figuring shewed that Antonio's plan had earned for the firm of Castro eleven hundred pounds more than the sum which would have been tardily paid by the royal household. Mr. Crowberry was radiant. He pressed

upon Antonio a hundred guineas, and added that if Senhor Castro did not give him a hundred guineas more he was an even worse miser than he looked. Mr. Crowberry concluded by saying that Antonio was too good for a piggery like Oporto, and that he must stay and make his fortune in London.

Antonio shook his head. How did he know that he was not already too late, and that the abbey had not passed irrevocably into desecrating hands? Now that he had amassed his two hundred pounds his course was clear. Besides, he was home-sick. For days he had been thinking of his famous namesake, the holy Antonio, called of Padua, but properly of Lisbon, whose crowning self-mortification was to exile himself for life from beautiful Portugal.

Nevertheless, he gave way to the next request of his kindly chief. Young Edward Crowberry, a muffish youth with soft yellow hair, was to be placed for three years in the Oporto office; and, with a view to shaking him up and opening his mind, Mr. Crowberry begged Antonio to take him overland through France and Spain. He himself, he said, would go by sea and meet them at Oporto.

Landing at Boulogne one August afternoon, Antonio and his charge travelled by a fast public coach to Amiens, and there, for the first time, the monk found his dreams of a Gothic cathedral come true. From Amiens they went to Beauvais, whose overweening choir offended his religious sense. At Rouen he lingered in wonder. The cathedral, with its unstudied harmony of many styles, reminded him of the Church herself—a divine idea working itself out in history through many minds, yet never in self-contradiction. Notre Dame de Paris

also impressed him deeply: it seemed bigger than Paris, bigger than France, and to be challenging both the metropolis and the nation to a truer grandeur of spirit and conduct. In the dimness cast by the thirteenth-century glass of Chartres he thought of Westminster Abbey, with its huddle of pagan monuments, and compared it with our Lady's glorious shrine, wherein not a single body, not even a saint's, lay buried. The stone embroideries of the west front of Tours recalled to him Henry the Fourth's saying that it ought to be under a glass case: and Antonio liked it the less on that account.

A torrential burst of rain had so replenished the meagre Loire that the travellers reached the city of Saint Martin in a light boat, from which they saw some of the châteaux of Touraine. But at the riverside inns Antonio was as deeply engrossed in the common wines as in the neighbouring architecture. As he drank them, white and red, he understood the wit and elegance of the Tourangeans, and wondered what the English would become if they could daily drink such draughts in place of their nerve-destroying tea, their brandied port, and their sluggish beer. But, although Mr. Crowberry senior had enjoined Antonio to shew Mr. Crowberry junior as many cellars and vineyards as possible, the monk recognised the hopelessness of sending the brisk juices of the Loire to the stolid drinkers of the Thames; and therefore he pushed on through Poitiers and Angoulême to Bordeaux.

At Bordeaux the two enquirers hired an imposing chariot. They were armed with letters of introduction to the great growers; and decency required that they should keep up appearances during their triumphal

progress through the Médoc. The vintage was in full swing: but it lacked the gaiety of the vintage in Portugal. Most of the vintagers were strangers from Poitiers, who did their work, drew their pay, and went home to spend it. The little bush-vines also, though marvellously well tended, lacked the picturesqueness of Portugal: and Antonio almost excited his yellow-haired charge by describing the great bunches of purple grapes pending from the green roof of a pergola, or blooming like clustered plums high in some tree with which the vine was intertwined.

The two were fêted at Brane Cantenac; patronised a little at the Château Margaux; treated respectfully at the Châteaux Lafitte, Léoville, and Larose; and received with open arms at the Château Latour. Young Crowberry expanded rapidly under the attentions which were lavished on him as the son of a big buyer: and it was only by hurrying him out of Pauillac in the nick of time that his mentor forestalled a desperate love-affair with a Basque maiden, dark and slender. As for Antonio, as an expert from Oporto, he was treated with deference, and he made the most of his opportunities. He would taste attentively the ripe grapes and then compare them with the wines of the same vineyard, both young and old.

From Royan, at the mouth of the Gironde, they ran before the wind in a smack as far as San Sebastian, in Spain, and posted thence, past bald limestone mountains, to Burgos. Young Crowberry, in whom Wine and his glimpse of Woman had wrought wonders, found the cathedral of Burgos worth all the cathedrals of France put together: and Antonio himself, while conscious of its faults, felt strangely moved by its

beauties. Three days later they were in Valladolid, where young Crowberry, making rapid progress, declared that with a box of building-bricks he himself would design a better cathedral than Herrera's fragment. At Salamanca, the last stopping-place in Spain, nearly all that Antonio had read about architecture was contradicted. Here was a cathedral raised in almost the worst period of Gothic: yet it impressed the beholder as one of the grandest temples in the world.

They left Salamanca early one October morning, while the city's grand towers and domes were still sharply silhouetted against the golden east. Young Crowberry was garrulous and dogmatic about everything; but Antonio hardly spoke, for he was nearing Portugal. Mile after mile of dreary plain resounded under the mules' little hoofs. At last the road began to climb awful mountains whence the malaria had driven nearly every living thing. They passed stone-huts of prehistoric hill-men, and Roman military monuments with braggart inscriptions. Then they descended. The landscape relaxed its frown. A few vines greened narrow terraces here and there in the rocks. Soon afterwards they reached a white house in the midst of orange trees. Two soldiers came out with muskets.

Antonio was once more in Portugal.

VI

On the morrow of young Crowberry's reunion with his impatient father at Oporto, Antonio made haste to give an account of his stewardship. About ten pounds in gold remained in his purse and he held, still uncashed, a letter of credit for thirty pounds more. Mr. Crowberry burst out laughing.

'If Teddy hadn't told me ten times over that he's fared like a fighting-cock,' he said, 'I should believe you've been living on fresh air and ship's biscuit.'

'I did my best to make him enjoy his travels,' responded Antonio, 'but, at the same time, I was reasonably careful.'

'You've made a man of him, anyway,' said the proud parent. 'He used to be the biggest muff in England. Believe me or not: but I've never had to knock him down until this morning.'

'This morning you knocked him down?' echoed Antonio, aghast. As a Portuguese he had been accustomed to see parents obey their children.

'Thank God, yes,' said Mr. Crowberry heartily. 'He was too damnably impudent about claret. But pick up this money. I don't want it, and I won't have it.'

The Englishman's determination was unshakeable, so Antonio picked up the coins and the draft. But he did so with reluctance: for it made doubly hard his task

of announcing that he sought release from the firm of Castro.

Mr. Crowberry was first incredulous, then contemptuous, and finally furious. He tried every device, from ridicule to blasphemy, in order to dissuade Antonio from his purpose. But the monk respectfully and gratefully stood firm. His heart, he said, was in the South. He hoped to buy a derelict farm which adjoined the vineyards of the suppressed abbey where he had made wine before coming to Oporto. More. He had even thought of approaching the Government for a lease of the monks' vineyards, with an option of outright purchase at the end of ten years. His intention, he added, was to make a Portuguese claret of supreme quality, such as should please an unprejudiced English palate more than the wines of Bordeaux, the growths of the grandest châteaux hardly excepted. He ended by very modestly begging Mr. Crowberry to act as his London agent on liberal terms.

Senhor Castro, on whom Mr. Crowberry ultimately devolved the task of shaking their assistant's resolution, was less unwilling to see Antonio go. He was a timid man: and although the operation with the Waterloo port had brought him an unexpected five hundred pounds at a very awkward moment of pressure in his private finance, he was fearful lest the next bold campaign should lead all concerned into disaster. Accordingly he presented his faithful servant with twenty pounds, to go with Mr. Crowberry's hundred guineas, and assured him of his friendly interest in all that Antonio might attempt in the South.

Mounted upon a stout little white horse which he knew he could sell at a profit after finishing his journey,

Antonio set his face southward one misty October morning. In his belt he carried two hundred and seventy-three pounds of English bank-notes and gold, as well as a few thousand reis in Portuguese silver for his expenses on the road. But although this beltful was so much larger than he had dared to hope for, he returned at once to the severe frugality of the days before he set sail for England. He hardly ever lay or ate in an inn. Tethering the docile little horse to a tree, he would take his night's rest in some out-of-the-way thicket. His meals were once more of black bread, snowy cheese, and ruby wine. These he would vary by occasional purchases of fruit. The last of the fresh figs and the first of the dried were in the markets, and the monk's halfpenny bought two heaped handsful of either.

With forebodings of change in his heart, Antonio made the short detour which would bring him to the parish of the old cura. His fear was not belied. The spruceness of the garden and the crystal clearness of the presbytery windows were infallible signs that a new reign had begun.

'When did the old padre die?' asked Antonio of a fisherman who was lounging against the church wall.

'Last year, Senhor.'

'Had he a long illness?'

'Not long. My son was with him when he died. The reverend Bishop was there too. On his last day our padre told them all that he was glad to be done with his pains and troubles: but he said he would cheerfully bear them longer, if it was God's will, so that he might change his life and begin to do a little good.'

'But surely he had done good already!' exclaimed Antonio.

'Senhor,' said the fisherman, almost resentfully, 'we didn't know it till he was gone, because his ways were rough: but he was a saint walking the earth. Good? Had he done good? I dare say he had done more good than your Worship.'

As Antonio continued his ride south he fell to thinking. In England he had once sat at dinner next to a whiskered curate, who was hot with anger against a proposal by one of the new-fangled High Churchmen to call a chapel-of-ease Saint Alban's. As far as Antonio could ascertain the Church of England recognised no saints after the apostolic age, and certainly none after the fourth century. Yet Antonio himself could name at least three Christians who had died saints' deaths, and at least one who had lived a saint's life.

Strangely enough it was on the same day, only a few hours after his pious reverie about sainthood, that Antonio succumbed for a season to the wiles of the devil. At midday the autumn sun was strong and he entered a roadside shanty for a pull of wine. Two or three peasants who were drinking made way for him respectfully; and Antonio's patriotic pride was stirred by the contrast between their quiet dignity and the vulgar shouting so common in the estaminets of France. The wine was bright and sharp, the floor was clean, and the little wooden hut was pleasantly dim and cool. But suddenly Antonio caught sight of himself in a cheap mirror, in a tawdry gilt frame, which hung behind the counter. The glass was so bad that it distorted the handsomest faces into lop-sided masks.

In an instant Antonio was transported back to England and to the great dining-room of the earl with its lordly sideboard and bevelled mirror. He did not

remember his unworldly ecstasy of that night: he saw only the beeswax candles, the snowy linen, the bubble-thin glasses, the crimson roses, the creaming wine, the scarlet footmen, and the white-armed young beauty in her proud diamonds and soft pearls. That—all that—was the flattering, delicious life on which he had turned his back in order that he might live and die in a wilderness, toiling early and late on stock-fish and chick-peas and dark bread and peasants' wine.

Tired out as he was by hard days and nights this sudden temptation overthrew Antonio. The cabin which had lured him aside from the garish dusty road by its dimness and coolness suddenly seemed foul and mean, the soft-eyed, soft-voiced countrymen seemed louts, the refreshing wine seemed sugar and vinegar. Forgetting everybody's presence he broke into a loud, bitter laugh, flung down the price of ten glasses of wine, scrambled upon his horse and dashed away.

'That man is mad,' said one of the peasants, gazing after the bobbing black core of the dwindling cloud of dust.

'He has committed a crime,' said another more gravely.

'He is a Spaniard,' said a third: and all felt that he had uttered the crowning word of horror.

For the first time in his life Antonio was cruel to a dumb beast. He struck at his horse's flanks savagely, lashing him on through the dust and heat. His whole soul was storming with rebellion. But a whinnying sound of pain and fear recalled him to his better self. He reined in his horse. The poor brute, accustomed to a gentle Portuguese master and filled with fright and bewilderment at these strange doings, whinnied again.

Leaping down, Antonio patted the quivering neck and looked round in the hope that there might be water. The scene which met his eyes shamed him. He was within a stone's-throw of the pine-clad hill where he had passed his first night out of doors, just after he fled from his brethren at Navares. With a rush of penitence he obeyed the sign. He thought of that good horse Babieca, the battle-charger of the Cid—that good horse who knelt down of his own accord outside the hidden shrine at the capture of Toledo. Still stroking and patting his animal's neck, Antonio led the way up into the grove. There he found the curved bark of a cork tree, and, turning up the two ends, he poured into this rude horse-trough every drop of wine from the skins in his saddle-bags and held it to the parched muzzle as a peace-offering.

The little white horse, having an excellent judgment, speedily licked the cork dry: but Antonio made no haste to remount. Unless some ill befell, he would know before nightfall whether he had come on a fool's errand or not. This was the last day of his journey: and it was fitting that he should recover a clear mind and a quiet spirit.

What sights were in store for him? Would he find the brook-side farm as trim as the old cura's presbytery, with a new master tending the orangery and the vineyard? And what of the monastery? Perhaps children were playing in and out of the cells, while beasts chewed maize-leaves in the cloisters. For more than two years Antonio had lacked news of the abbey's fate. Indeed, only twice since his northward flight had he heard a word about it. The man from Lisbon, to whom he owed his start in the house of Castro, had told Antonio

that the Lisbon authorities were not forcing the sale of this particular property because they did not wish to revive the scandal of Ponte Quebrada and the stolen treasures. But this was two summers ago: and much might have happened since then.

Recumbent under the pines Antonio began to revolve plans of action in case either the farm or the abbey should have passed into other hands. But he soon desisted from his thinking. After all, had not the same problem pressed upon him many a time in Oporto, and had he not always solved it in the same way? To keep the holy place inviolate until the monk's toil and self-denial should enable him to return—this surely was God's part of the work. Antonio rose to his feet, confident that he was not too late.

The clock was striking five when he cantered through Navares. As he passed the tavern where he had been insulted, and the white barns of the corn-merchant, he seemed to be revisiting hardly recognisable scenes; for the failing light of the November afternoon was not like the June evening of the monks' exodus. Most of the vines beside the roads had been stripped of their leaves, and such foliage as remained was discoloured and tattered. And there was something melancholy in the autumn fields, where giant gourds of many colours lay on the bare earth among the drooping maize-plants. He pressed on. Very soon he reached the spot where the Prior had met the courier from Lisbon: but he was hardly sure of it in the gloom. The darkness deepened, and his little white horse trotted through it, glimmering like a ghost. At last the pleasant voice of hurrying waters hailed him through the dusk.

He had reached the farm.

No light, no sound, met Antonio's straining eyes and ears as he climbed the knoll. Leaving his horse to graze, he advanced eagerly into the midst of the silent buildings. They were still deserted. He pushed through rank growths into the orangery, and as he touched one of the pale orbs above his head he knew that the farm had lain all the time uncared-for and untilled. With a full heart he gave thanks to God.

The dull booming of the sulky Atlantic was almost drowned by the cheerful clatter of the headlong brook. Antonio drew near to the vociferous waters as if to compel an answer to his question. Hardly an hour before those waters had leapt down the mountain above the guest-house, they had danced through the monks' vineyard, they had plunged along the dark tunnel which led them under the refectory, they had resounded strangely in the vast kitchen, they had emerged into the Abbot's garden, and at last they had tumbled headlong down the slopes to seethe and shout at Antonio's feet. He would fain have demanded of them, 'Is all well?'

But it was needful to possess his soul in patience until the rising of the moon: so Antonio returned to his saddle-bags and drew forth a supper of bread and dried figs. From time to time he would mount the knoll and would peer vainly through the darkness in the direction of the monastery. Once or twice, to kill time, he wandered back along the road: but he soon returned, for the moaning of the Atlantic made itself drearily insistent whenever he got out of hearing of the merry torrent.

As the hour of moonrise drew nearer the monk's heart beat faster. Deep down in his soul there was still

a calm confidence that all was well: but the surface of his mind was tumultuous with myriad hopes and fears. He tried to groom his horse and left the work half done: he began to say his rosary and broke off half-way through the second Mystery: he sat down, rose up, and sat down again twenty times. Perhaps the monastery had escaped desecration: but who could assure him that winter gales and summer heats and spring floods had not torn off roofs or shrunk up timbers or whirled away walls? For all he knew the moon would rise upon a ruin.

At length a smear of watery light along the horizon shewed that the moon's orb was urging up into a bank of mist. Antonio turned and ran to the top of the knoll in time to see a vague luminosity blanching the leaden waters of the ocean. Near objects became visible. He could make out the white oblong of the farmstead and the white flanks of his horse. But the further landscape and the tops of the hills seemed withdrawn into denser shadow than before.

The suspense was hard to bear: but Antonio knew it could not be prolonged. Above the bank of cloud stars were shining in a clear heaven. He waited. Now and again he uttered fragments of prayers.

The cloud-bank went on sinking slowly into the sea all the time the moon was mounting out of it, until the rim of the round shield gleamed like a piece of old silver-gilt through the last smoky veil. Then the rim of the shield pushed up clear, shining against the blue as cold and sharp and bright as a scythe. Antonio yearned towards it, trembling all over: but he did not turn round till the entire white orb was floating free before his eyes.

He gazed down the knoll and saw, as clear as noonday, the old camp of the monks and the troopers. He saw the extent of the farm, its house and buildings, its fields and vineyards and orchards. He saw the Atlantic, firm and shining, like a field of ice. He saw his horse, tethered to a tree and grazing softly. He saw the swirling brook, like liquid jet, bearing curds and suds and bergs of snow. He saw the straight pines, the jewelled orange-grove, the white road, the violet heavens. Then, with the Name upon his lips, he turned round.

High on her holy hill, with a rich curtain of pine-woods drawn out behind her throne, the abbey chapel looked down upon Antonio all white and fair and inviolate. The rains which had burst around her and the suns which had burned upon her had only enhanced her whiteness, till she shone like her Lord, transfigured upon Mount Hermon. A cry burst from Antonio's lips. His heart sang *Tota pulchra es amica mea*: 'Thou art altogether fair, my love.' The chapel seemed a glorious ark, newly borne to rest upon her Ararat by the floods of silver moonlight. Like Saint John on Patmos Antonio could have cried: 'I see the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending from heaven, from God, arrayed like a Bride adorned for her Bridegroom.' In Antonio's ears, as in John's, an angel seemed to say: 'Come, and I will shew thee the Bride, the spouse of the Lamb.'

Antonio had planned to wait until daybreak before he sought entrance to his old home. But the Spirit of God bade him re-enter the sacred place in the first ecstasy of his vision. '*Spiritus et sponsa dicunt, Veni*: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come,"' Antonio murmured; and he began to climb the hill.

VII

ANTONIO knew a spot where the brook, swollen with winter rains, had smashed down the arch through which it used to flow: and there he scrambled up into the abbey domain. The ever-mounting moon illuminated the familiar scenes with faerie radiance.

Emitte lucem tuam, said Antonio in fervent prayer and thanksgiving, as he breasted the weed-grown slope. 'Send forth thy light and thy truth: they shall lead me to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles, and I will go unto the altar of God.' And when an opening in the trees once more shewed him the glistening chapel his mind swung from the Psalter to the Apocalypse, and he thought once more of Saint John's vision of the Bride *habentem claritatem Dei:* 'having the clear-shining of God, and her light like a precious stone's, like a jasper's, like crystal.'

Grass was growing between the paving-stones in front of the chapel and lichens flourished on the north wall. The gardens were unkempt, and one had to break a way through alleys and avenues. On banks and terraces the fleshy-leaved ice-plant had secured firm holding. But, so far as outward appearances went, the abbey had suffered no irreparable harm.

Massive padlocks guarded all the entrances, while seals, affixed to stout bands of linen, spoke eloquently of the zeal which the Government had shewn after the

affair of their precious Visconde de Ponte Quebrada. But Antonio was not to be dismayed by locks, bolts, and bars. For years he had cherished a plan of obtaining entrance to the monastery, and he did not delay its execution.

Antonio knew that, hidden in the wood, there was a sluice by which the torrent's waters could be diverted from the abbey kitchen into their original channel. This sluice had been used only four times a year, when the bed of the stream was cleaned out: but it was kept in good working order. As he plunged under the trees the monk understood the difference between the brightest moonlight and the weakest daylight: but he had little difficulty in finding what he sought.

The gear of the sluice was stiff: but Antonio was strong, and his task was soon accomplished. For the first time in three years the water began gurgling among the dust and dead leaves of its ancient bed, and nothing but a slender runnel was left for the stone channel which ran through the kitchen.

Antonio threw off his boots and socks and outer garments and swung himself down into the ankle-deep stream. Before him yawned the black tunnel by which the waters passed under the whole width of the refectory, a distance of about eight yards. He went down on his hands and knees and crawled along towards the ghostly light which gleamed at the farther end. His progress was painful. The small boulders which had accumulated in the passage during three years of neglect cut his hands and bruised his knees and tore his feet. But he did not turn back; and soon he was standing in the moon-lit kitchen.

The blue-and-white tiles, the blue *Paz* on its white

ground, the stoves, the great jars and pots, the burnished copper chimney—all were there as of old. Antonio opened the door of the refectory. Six or seven of the bottles emptied by the Visconde and the Captain had been stacked in a corner, probably by some person who went through the monastery before the padlocking and sealing: but in all other respects the noble room was in perfect order.

The monk made his way to the cells. They had not been disturbed since the monks quitted them. The big candelabrum had not been removed from the cell of the Abbot. Antonio entered his own cell with a thumping pulse. The few books and oddments which, despite the strict letter of Saint Benedict's rule, had been considered his own, were all in their due places. A spare habit was hanging on the wall. Portugal's wonderful climate had kept it so dry and sweet that he put it on as if it were the coat he had left lying on the grass outside.

The garb had not grown strange to Antonio: for since his expulsion from the abbey rarely had a day passed without his saying some part of the Divine Office, garbed in the rusty habit which he had worn at Navares. But, as he donned the Benedictine uniform in his own cell of a Benedictine abbey, the monk's emotion overpowered him. The cell was too strait and dark for the immense and sublime expansion of his spirit. He hastened out, along the dim corridor, and up the winding steps which led to the flat roof of the cloister.

Antonio sat down on the cork bench where he had mused on the night of his ordination, just before he heard the chink of steel. The November moonlight was not less gracious than the May dusk. The cross in

the monks' graveyard uprose as white and slender as a taper on an altar, and all the earth seemed consecrated ground. And there the young priest sat for a long time, without moving, while he recalled, beginning with the march to Navares, the motley events which had filled the one-and-forty months of his exile. Finally he lived over again his last night in the abbey. Other men, other scenes, other words, other deeds seemed faint and far away: but the face of the dying Abbot was clear in his memory, and the old man's words might still have been sounding in the young monk's ears. Above all else the Abbot's prophecy rang out like bells: 'I see our chapel, swept and garnished. I see Antonio, in his old place, doing the Work of God.'

The hour was come. He rose and descended the spiral stairway. At the entrance of the chapel he paused, and, falling upon his knees, implored pardon for his brief apostasy in the roadside wine-shop. Then with bowed head and reverent steps he crossed the sacred threshold.

The few windows were placed so high and were so deeply set in the thick walls that very little moonlight could enter the chapel. Nearly all the nave was filled with darkness. But the choir, raised on a marble floor, could be dimly seen, while the altar, higher still, received the full glory of the light. The doors of the empty tabernacle were wide open, as on Good Friday, the six tall candles still stood in their places, and no one had removed the vases with their silver-gilt symbols of the Holy Eucharist—wheat-ears and vine-leaves and grapes. Behind the crucifix rose a statue of our Lady treading down a serpent and holding forth towards Antonio the divine Child. Upon His head was a crown set with

brilliants of old paste which burned bluish white in the cold moonlight.

Antonio groped his way to his old stall. There, humbly kneeling upon his knees, he offered up his prayers and praise. He prayed for his brethren of three years before, picturing each one of them in his particular stall; and his most fervent petitions were for the good estate of Father Sebastian, alive or dead.

It was the time of Matins. He thought of his monastic brethren throughout the world rising from their beds to praise God, some of them under the soaring vaults of proud and rich abbeys, some of them in the poor lodgings of weary exiles. His prodigious memory enabled him, without the aid of a book, to recite nearly the whole of Matins, including parts of the Proper; and this he did, rising up and kneeling down as if the whole community were reciting the Office with him.

As he rose from his knees the moon's light had all but faded from the chapel. Only upon the bright points of the Holy Child's diadem did some stray beam mysteriously linger. And Antonio, abiding in his place, his soul filled full with peace, said softly: '*Civitas non eget sole:* "The city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to beam in her; for God's clear-shining hath enlightened her and her lamp is the Lamb."'

Thus did Antonio, in his old place, begin once more to do the Work of God.

VIII

The village nearest to the abandoned farm nestled on the other side of the hill, about four miles away. Thither Antonio tramped at sunrise. Had he ridden his horse the natives might have formed swollen notions as to his wealth and manner of life: so he footed it modestly, in his oldest clothes.

The tiny, parchment-faced old dame at whose wine-shop he ate and drank a threepenny breakfast was able and willing to tell him nearly all he wanted to know. The farm, she said, belonged to a bed-ridden widow in Navares, whose husband and two sons had been killed by the same Constitutionalist volley during the first Miguelista attack on Oporto. This poor widow, she added, was living unhappily with her only daughter, the wife of a Navares tanner.

It was safe for Antonio to show himself openly in the village and to ask his questions: for the monks had kept enclosure with such strictness that the villagers could have no recollection of the younger fathers. But he deemed it prudent to hold his tongue about the deserted monastery; and, having put down his three vintens, he struck out a path over the hills to Navares.

Fortunately the tanner was at home. He was an overgrown man whose bad humour evidently proceeded from dyspepsia: and the monk did not envy the hapless woman who had to subsist on his charity. Eyeing

Antonio's boots and clothes with suspicion, the tanner answered every question so curtly and sulkily that Antonio at last shewed spirit, and said:

'Perhaps it will be better for me to employ a notary?'

'Notary? No, certainly not,' gasped the tanner, suddenly alarmed. He was slothful in business; and every lawyer within twenty miles knew him well as a chronic defendant in the civil courts.

'I will give your Worship's mother-in-law one hundred and fifty pounds for the whole property,' said Antonio, 'provided the offer is accepted to-day.'

'One hundred and fifty pounds?' snorted the tanner, secretly overjoyed; 'the Senhor is joking. He means three hundred; and even then I should be as good as making him a present of the place.'

Antonio, who had learned in Oporto and in London to read the faces of men cleverer than the tanner, saw that, even if he cut his offer down to a hundred and twenty-five, he could still be sure of the farm. But he knew that a hundred and fifty was the fair price: and, although he had denied himself a penn'orth of cheese at breakfast, he was not going to make twenty-five pounds out of a widow's extremity.

'Your Worship's presents are not wanted,' he retorted stiffly, taking up his hat. 'I said a hundred and fifty. I meant it. I don't haggle. Good day.'

The tanner spluttered out a long speech, and finally dragged Antonio upstairs into a stuffy little room where his wife's mother was lying in bed with a black rosary in her thin white hand. He appealed to Antonio, in the name of the commonest decency and humanity, to avoid future prickings of conscience by giving the ridiculous price of two hundred pounds for the best

farm in all Portugal, thus defrauding a dying widow of a round hundred only.

'You may take it or leave it,' said Antonio. 'One hundred and fifty pounds, not a vintem more, not a vintem less. Stay. The winter is coming, and the Senhora's blood needs warming. I come from a wine-lodge in Oporto. I have taken wines to England for the King himself. See. Over and above the price, I will send the Senhora ten pounds' worth of old port-wine, and God grant it may do her good.'

The aged sufferer looked up at the monk in thankful astonishment. She had been a personage in her time: but deference and kindness had lately become so unfamiliar that she had expected to die without encountering them again. Clutching her beads, she mumbled at Antonio some words of gratitude and benediction.

The tanner was first greatly chagrined and afterwards a little ashamed: and, at the foot of the stairs, he agreed to his visitor's terms. It was arranged that Antonio should return at noon with a notary to complete the purchase. The cura of Navares, to whom the monk had recourse, named a trustworthy man of law: and by four o'clock the money had passed from Antonio's belt to the tanner's cash-box, the necessary documents had been signed, sealed, and delivered, and the new owner was tramping back to the farm with the keys in his pocket.

As in the cells and corridors of the great abbey, so in the low rooms of the little farm-house the Portuguese sun had counteracted the Portuguese rains, and the place was clean and dry. Some bulky chests, two heavy tables, a dresser, and two wooden bedsteads had been left behind, for the simple reason that the original

cabinet-maker had constructed them inside the house, and there was no door or window wide enough for their egress. Antonio noted with satisfaction that two or three pounds would buy all he required in the way of linen, chairs, crockery, and household utensils.

Through want of irrigation the oranges on the trees were small, sour, and hard. Antonio, however, was much more interested in the vines. To an untrained eye they would have seemed a hopeless intertanglement of decaying leaves, with sparse bunches of withered currants hiding here and there: but Antonio quickly saw that skill and hard labour would reclaim them. Better still, he found a three-acre patch of light arable land which almost realised his ideal site for an entirely new vineyard of bush-vines. The wine-press, in one of the outbuildings, had seen better days: but this did not worry Antonio, as he was determined, in any case, to import a new wine-making plant from Bordeaux.

Next morning the young farmer was early in the saddle on his way to Villa Branca, ten leagues to the east. He had learned at Navares that Villa Branca was the seat of a puissant official representing the Fazenda, or Portuguese Exchequer, and that the suppressed abbeys and monasteries of the district were administered by this exalted personage. He cantered into Villa Branca with a clear proposal to make. Would the Fazenda accept an annual rent of fifty pounds for the abbey lands, at the same time giving Antonio the option of buying the whole property, at the end of ten years, for two thousand pounds? If so he, Antonio, would engage to cultivate the lands and to keep the buildings in repair.

Although his ride was ten leagues long, the monk

reached the local offices of the Fazenda nearly an hour earlier than the official, who lived a hundred yards away. The waiting-room was more than half filled with high stacks of books, most of them in old calf bindings. A glance shewed that these were the spoils of monastic libraries, dumped down anyhow in the Fazenda building until somebody from Lisbon should arrive to divide them between the national and municipal libraries. Antonio picked up a volume at random. It was a sequence of Lenten meditations in French; and the hand of some long dead Augustinian had filled the fly leaves with pious annotations. Antonio was poring over this crabbed and faded script when the Personage entered the room.

Had it been his first encounter with a highly-placed civil servant, the monk would have concluded that the Personage knew his secret; that his design, as an ardent Benedictine religious, of restoring the abbey to his Order was perfectly understood; and that the haughtiness and suspiciousness of the Personage's manner were accordingly explained. But Antonio's years in the world had made him familiar with the masterfulness of the State's so-called servants and with their rudeness to the hard-working people from whom their excessive salaries were extracted. So he kept his temper, and even tried to commend his proposal by stating it in studiously respectful language.

The Personage, leaving Antonio standing against a pile of stolen books, listened with increasing impatience and scorn: and, before the monk had finished, he interrupted him to say that such a transaction was out of the question; that the Minister would not listen to it for a moment; that he, the Personage, had received

no instructions from Lisbon to press forward the sale of this particular abbey; and that, when it came into the market, the reserve price would be not less than three thousand pounds, paid in cash, once for all, forthwith.

Antonio tried in vain to argue. He exhibited the fifty pounds, which he had brought with him as a first instalment, to cold eyes; for the Personage saw no way of sticking to the money himself. The deeds of the little farm, which Antonio was for shewing as proofs that he was a man of substance, were waved aside; and when he began to speak of giving references to solid and reputable citizens of Oporto and of London, the Personage had ceased to listen. A bell rang, a clerk appeared, some remarks were exchanged, and Antonio, without being able to say that he had received insults or even inattention, somehow found himself in the glaring street.

He rode home with a troubled face. Righteous anger, bitter disappointment, gnawing fear possessed him in turn. But, as he entered his little home and began to unpack the few things he had bought for its furnishing, his spirits rose. The knife and fork with which he ate his plain supper had wooden handles; his goblet was of almost opaque glass an eighth of an inch thick; the coarse tablecloth was more brown than white, and his lamp was a candle stuck in a bottle. Nevertheless he supped happily, even gaily; and it was with sustained fervour that he recited what remained of his Office.

Strenuous days followed. From the late November sunrise to the early November sunset Antonio laboured harder than a navvy. The making of the new vine-

yard was his principal care: and by the end of the year the toughest part of the job had been soundly done. Only on a Sunday did the toiler rest from his labours. On the morning of that day he would hear Mass in the over-gilded village church; and, in the evening, when darkness fell, he would crawl along the torrent's bed into the abbey kitchen, and thence steal softly to his old stall in the chapel. There he would recite Compline from memory: and afterwards, prostrate before the empty tabernacle, he would beseech his Lord to fulfil those last and grandest words of the Abbot's prophecy: 'I see Antonio standing before the high altar. I see him holding up our great chalice. I see him offering the Holy Sacrifice for us all.'

BOOK III
MARGARIDA

I

TOWARDS nightfall on the feast of the Three Kings the heavens were opened. From every inch of the sombre sky descended cold, straight rain until the roads were rivers and the hill-sides began to sing.

When the storm burst Antonio was in the abbey chapel, saying Vespers in his old stall. He had duly observed the great festival of the Epiphany, abstaining from servile work and hearing Mass at the village: and, as on Sundays, he was rounding off the holy day by saying his Office in the choir. But the vehemence of the storm alarmed him. He rose hastily, and made his way through the darkling cloisters and corridors.

As he neared the kitchen a roaring sound filled Antonio's startled ears. It was the torrent. Although he had rammed the sluice-gate well home only half an hour before, the stream was racing through the kitchen in a foaming flood.

'The sluice-gate has broken,' said Antonio to himself. 'The timbers must have rotted all of a sudden. But there's just time to get out.'

Only the faintest light gleamed through the tunnel under the refectory. By lying on his chest upon the stones Antonio could just see the leaden sky. He could see, too, that the water was rising higher and higher, and that the space between the level of the water and the centre of the tunnel vaulting was less than two feet.

The monk flung off his habit and jumped down into the torrent. It almost touched his arm-pits. The waters were icy cold; but this troubled him less than their headlong violence which threatened to sweep him away.

He entered the tunnel. As it was barely five feet from floor to keystone, the broad-shouldered giant had to hump his back and to work himself along in a frog-like posture. More than once stones, bowled along by the force of the flood, struck cruelly at his feet and ankles, and it was only by clutching with bleeding fingers at the sides of the vault that he could make the smallest headway. Even while he was escaping from it the water went on rising: and it was with dripping locks, and with eyes and ears full of muddy water, that he finally broke out into the free air.

The rain was pouring down so torrentially as he climbed up to the bank that he would have been as dry in the middle of the stream. As for his clothes, which he had rolled up as usual and laid behind a bush, he knew they must be wetter than his skin. Still, there was nothing for it but to scramble into them and dash for home. Antonio stooped to pick up the bundle.

It was gone.

In a flash he knew that Man as well as Nature had come to fight him. The instinct of danger made him spring back from the water and clench both fists to strike. And he had hardly a second to wait. Like a beast from its lair, a black body sprang at him out of the pouring trees.

The staggering suddenness of its onslaught nearly flung Antonio to the ground. Before he knew what was happening, his assailant had dragged him to within

a yard of the stream's edge and was making ready to shove him into the swirling water. But the monk got his grip just in time; and the stranger, fearful of meeting the end he had planned for Antonio, lurched back over the sodden grass.

Locked together, both men paused for breath. In one point Antonio had the advantage. He was at ease in thin cotton undergarments, while his adversary was encumbered by soaked garments of peasant stuff and cut. On the other hand, the stranger was fresh for the fray, whereas Antonio's battling against the flood in the tunnel had broken his wind. Meanwhile, to cool them for the second round, the stinging rain thrashed down impatiently upon them both.

With a tremendous rally of strength Antonio hurled the other away from him and then rushed in like lightning to get a better grip. He succeeded; and little by little he began to crush his foe down upon the sloppy ground. He had no relish for manslaughter even in self-defence; and, instead of thrusting him into the stream, he sought only to pin the stranger down with hands and knees and to make him give satisfaction for his murderous onrush. But the monk's strength began to fail him. His half-frozen feet were bleeding, his heart was thumping against his ribs, the veins on his forehead stood out like thick string, and his breath came and went in quick, thick gasps.

The stranger felt his opportunity; and, inch by inch, Antonio was dragged, pushed, shouldered, butted, elbowed, kneed back to the torrent's brim. But the ground was slippery: and both the wrestlers slithered and crashed down heavily.

They were up again in a twinkling, facing each other

with intent eyes. The stranger's shoulders were bent and his hands touched his knees as he crouched for a second spring. At the sight of him a white flash of memory blazed across Antonio's mind. Those tigerish eyes, those hunched shoulders, those great, terrible hands outspread upon those clumsy knees—he had seen them all before. By this time his eyes were used to the dusk and mist, and he knew he was not deceived: for he could discern a wound on the peasant's cheek. Before the other had time to make his pounce, the monk cried out in imperious tones:

'Hold. I know you. We are friends!'

'Friends?' hissed the stranger. 'Pretty friends! I don't make friends with thieves and atheists.'

All the same, his taut muscles relaxed. Antonio's tone had awed him a little, and Antonio's words had puzzled him a great deal. His shoulders unbent and he did not spring.

'I am not an atheist and I am not a thief,' said Antonio sternly. 'But even thieves and atheists are not so bad as murderers. Why have you tried to drown me in this torrent?'

'Because you're a spy and a blasphemer and a robber.'

'Tell me your name,' the monk demanded. And when the other only responded by a threatening gesture he added: 'Never mind. I know it already. You are called José. You live at Pedrinha das Areias.'

The peasant's clenched hands dropped open at his sides, and he gave a low cry of astonishment and fright.

'You fought with Dom Pedro at the siege of Oporto,' continued the monk. 'It was there you lost two fingers from your left hand. Wait. I haven't finished. Nearly

four years ago you were one of the troop which came to drive the monks out of this abbey. You were sent back home for quarrelling with another soldier about religion. You rode back to Oliveira on your own horse. Now, I ask you again, why have you tried to murder me?'

'It's a lie that I came here to drive out monks,' cried the peasant, nearly choking with anger. 'I didn't know we'd been sent on such dirty work.'

'Why have you tried to murder me?'

'Because . . . because you're in the pay of that accursed Viscount. Murder you? Yes, God helping me, I'll do it this minute!'

'God is not helping you, and you won't do it this minute,' said Antonio calmly. 'Now that I've got back my wind you haven't a ghost of a chance. You lost two fingers fighting, like a brave man, at Oporto. Understand. If there's no other way, I shall have to twist either your right wrist or your left ankle to keep you quiet. So——'

His mouth was stopped by José's lightning onslaught. Once more they rocked to and fro in a terrible embrace. But Antonio had spoken the truth. His wind had come back, and there was no chance for José. Within forty seconds the monk had his man fairly down. He pinned him, face upwards, on the grass, kneeling upon his thighs and gripping his shoulders with hands like steel. And all the time the streaming rain came pouring, pouring, pouring down.

'José,' began Antonio, in a voice of infinite pity and kindness, 'my poor friend——'

A horrible imprecation broke from the writhing peasant. It was the more frightful to hear because it

so evidently came from lips which rarely cursed or swore.

'José,' the monk commanded, altering his tone, 'in the name of Jesus Christ I charge you to listen. I am your friend. I am not in the pay of the Viscount of Ponte Quebrada. I was in the abbey to-night simply to pray and to worship God.'

But José was staring at him with wide eyes. The hatred had died out of his face, and he struggled hard to seize some elusive memory. Suddenly he cried:

'Tell me. That night. There were young monks, two monks, at the gate. One coughed and was like death. The other . . .'

He paused and looked at Antonio with eyes that yearned. The monk started. If he answered, his secret would be out. Yet how could he be silent? An inward voice bade him answer freely.

'I was the other monk,' he said. 'In the monastery they called me Father Antonio.'

As he spoke he released his captive and stood up. José stumbled to his feet like a man dazed, and faced Antonio in the rain with bent head and fidgeting hands.

'Give me my clothes,' ordered the monk.

The peasant drew forth an almost dry bundle of clothes from a hollow tree and would have helped Antonio to put them on. But the monk waved him aside and was soon inside the garments.

'Follow me,' he said.

In spite of his bleeding feet he set a breakneck pace down the hill. At the boundary wall of the abbey, where the torrent foamed through the broken arch, he halted; and if the pair had not been able to leap from boulder to boulder like mountain-goats they could not

have regained the open heath. The night grew blacker; and twice or thrice, where there were patches of clay, they slipped and fell. But no bones were broken; and in less than three quarters of an hour from the beginning of their fight the two men were at Antonio's door.

II

THE heap of pine-cones burning on Antonio's narrow hearth crackled pleasantly and gave out fragrant vapours. But, as the monk crouched over it chafing his nerveless hands, he could not help thinking of the blaze he had seen in the vast fireplace of a famous old English banqueting-hall at the close of a chilly, rainy day. The recollection increased his resentment against the shaggy José, who was waiting for his new master's word as meekly as a drenched sheep-dog on a moor. Antonio's pity was submerged for the moment under his disgust at having had to fight for life, half-naked, in a tropical downpour.

'Here are some dry clothes,' he said sharply, opening a chest and throwing out the suit in which he had ridden to Villa Branca. And, while José was changing, he stamped upstairs to do the same.

Antonio boasted three suits in all. The oldest was the dripping raiment he was actually wearing—the clothes which José had bundled into the hollow tree. The second was the suit he had lent to his guest. The third was the masterpiece in broadcloth which a London tailor had made at the expense of Messrs. Crowberry and Castro for Antonio's memorable journey. Over and above these the monk possessed his habit.

It was a choice between the patched, rusty-black habit or the fine gentleman's broadcloth. Antonio

hesitated. At last he put on the habit and returned to the kitchen.

José, awkward in his town-made clothes, stood waiting. From the extreme of bloodthirstiness he had passed to the extreme of sheepishness: and, as Antonio entered in his monkish garb, he retreated a step and went down clumsily on his knees as if he saw a priest on his way to the altar.

'Get up,' said Antonio. 'I am wearing my monk's habit simply because my clothes are wet. Get up. Nearer the fire. Sit down. Tell me why you were at the abbey to-night.'

José got up and approached the hearth, where he seated himself on the keg which was Antonio's second-best stool. But he remained tongue-tied. The monk repeated his question.

'Your Reverence——' began José. Then his tongue was tied once more.

'Never mind "Your Reverence" just now,' said Antonio, more kindly. 'Tell me a plain tale. What were you doing at the abbey? Why did you try to drown me before you gave me a chance to explain? It is a serious matter. If I'd been a weaker man, at this moment you would be a murderer.'

'I did wrong, Father,' said José humbly. 'But God knows I thought I was doing right. I thought your Reverence had found out about the things and that he'd come to steal them.'

'What things?'

'The things the Viscount of Pont' Quebrad' buried in the ground.'

Antonio started violently. He paced the room. Then he hurried back to the fireside and said:

'Wait. We must understand one another. When we monks were driven out, all those things were still in the sacristy. All I know about the Viscount burying them in the ground is this. One night in Oporto a gentleman from Lisbon told me that the Viscount and the captain had pretended to bury them. He said the Viscount was a wonderful play-actor. But he told me that all Lisbon believed he had never buried them at all. He had smuggled them out of the country.'

'That's what everybody thinks, Father," said José, so eagerly that his tongue was fairly loosened. 'And the Viscount had to leave Portugal. But he didn't steal the things at all. Only he tried to: so he deserved to be punished all the same. Didn't he, Father?'

'He did. But I don't understand.'

'It was this way, Father. The captain—may God bless him, he was a fine man till he met the Viscount—the captain, he ordered me to go home. That night I rode as far as Oliveira, five leagues from Pedrinha. There I found that my mother was dead. May God rest her soul! I felt I couldn't go home; so I sold my horse in Oliveira for sixty-seven milreis. I only got two milreis for the saddle because it belonged to the Government. Still, they owed me my pay, didn't they, Father?'

'Get on, get on,' snapped Antonio. 'What has all this to do with the Viscount and the things?'

'When I'd sold the horse I came back to the abbey. I wanted to see what became of the monks and whether the Viscount would beat the Abbot. It took me all day, tracking over the mountains. In the middle of the afternoon I saw the monks down at the bottom of the hill marching to Navares, with some of our men on

horses. But I didn't turn back. I had a score to settle with Sergeant Carvalho, if he hadn't gone to Navares. It was all on account of Ferreira, the fat corporal. Only myself knows how——'

'You came back to the abbey over the mountains. Go on.'

'I didn't dare walk in at the gates, so I waited till it was dark and climbed the wall in the wood behind what they called the guest-house. It was nearly midnight. As I got near the guest-house, I heard voices among the trees. There were two men, with a dark lantern.'

'The Viscount and the captain?'

'Yes, Father. They were digging, in their shirt-sleeves, only the captain was doing all the work. I thought it was strange, Father; so I crawled along softly and hid myself where I could see what they were doing. When the hole was dug they went into the trees. The Viscount trod on the brim of my hat, but he didn't see it. They came back with some flat boxes and put them in the hole. The captain went to work very hard to fill the hole up again; but the Viscount swore at him and said: "The more dirt you chuck in now the more we shall have to shovel out to-morrow night." So they filled it in loose and covered it up with dead leaves. Then they hid the spades in the bushes and went away.'

'And you didn't?'

'I stayed, Father. I knew they had been burying what was not theirs. So I found one of the spades and unburied the boxes and carried them on my head to a sand-pit that I'd tumbled into when I climbed over the wall. I buried them there, in loose sand, where one place looked just like another.'

'That was clever,' said Antonio. 'Go on.'

'All the next day I lay hiding, with only one piece of bread to eat and water to drink. But I was glad I hadn't gone away. At night they came again, with ropes and canvas. They began talking about some mules, and the Viscount kept mentioning a name that I can't remember; only I know it wasn't Portuguese. Then they raked off the dead leaves and started digging. But, oh, Father! I wonder they didn't find me and skin me alive, because when they saw the hole was empty, I nearly burst myself to keep from laughing. They would have heard me, sure enough, if they hadn't fallen to quarrelling. In the end the Viscount said the captain had stolen a march on him, and he called him a——'

'Never mind what he called him.'

'At that, the captain struck the Viscount in the face. I was frightened then. I thought there was going to be murder. But, all of a sudden, they made up the quarrel and the captain said: "What are we going to do?" The Viscount said: "Those thieves of monks have hidden it, and we'll find it, or some of them shall swing for it." But the captain said: "What if we can't find it? What about the Government?" The Viscount said: "That's easy. When the van and the men come from Lisbon we'll bring them to this hole. We can take our Bible oath, both of us, that we buried it here ourselves, for fear of treachery among the men: and we can swear that we haven't the ghost of an idea who has taken it away. But we'll find it to-night if we search till morning; and next week it shall be in England, safe and sound." Then they took the lantern to begin hunting: so I picked myself up and slipped off to the sand-pit.'

'And they didn't follow?'

'Not at once, Father. They did not come there till day-break. But the sun the day before had dried all the sand the same colour. They stuck in sticks both sides of the right place: bu they didn't find it.'

José ceased.

'And what happened next?'

'I don't know, Father. Some say the Marquis almost made people believe he was dumbfounded when the new soldiers from Lisbon dug in the hole. But that can't be right; because he left the hole open. I only know that people said he had never put the things in the hole at all, and he had to leave Portugal, and the captain was turned out of the army. That's all.'

Antonio took two more turns up and down the room before he demanded:

'Where are the things now?'

José's face clouded; and his eyes, which had burned brightly with excitement during his recital, were suddenly dulled by trouble. A few moments later he became visibly ashamed of his suspiciousness, and he would have begun stammering a speech if Antonio, who could read the whole of his simple mind, had not said:

'Wait. I understand. You believe our Lord sent you to snatch back His own from wicked men. For nearly four years you have guarded the treasure like a faithful watch-dog, and now you hesitate to trust me. It is natural.'

José stared in wonder at this mysterious monk, who knew his thoughts even better than he knew them himself.

'But listen,' Antonio went on. 'For nearly four

years I too have guarded a secret. The night when you dug up the boxes, José, that same night was the last night the world saw me as a monk. Like you, I lay all that night under the trees. Since then the world has known me as a clerk, a wine-grower, a commercial traveller, a farmer. But to-night, as soon as you asked me for my secret, I gave it. You are the only man in the world who knows that the owner of this little farm is the monk Antonio. Still, although I've told you my secret, that does not force you to tell me yours.'

José stirred uneasily.

'This is what I propose,' concluded Antonio. 'I will swear to you, here and now, a solemn oath that if you tell me your secret I will never reveal it until the monks return. And you, on your part, shall swear that you will not breathe a hint of my own secret to a living soul.'

'The things are buried in the cloister,' José blurted out. 'There are graves there, under the stones, but they haven't all got monks inside. I lifted up a gravestone with no printing on it and I put the boxes in. It's on the north side, to the left, just opposite the little Moses in the bulrushes.'

'I thank you, José, and I admire you,' said Antonio, pressing the huge hand. 'All the same, we will swear our oaths. It will make both of us easier in our minds.'

A small book of the Gospels, printed in the vernacular, lay on the table. Antonio placed his hand upon it, and swore in clear words and solemn tones that he would keep the secret of the buried boxes. The oath he dictated to José was longer and more picturesque. Before framing it he elicited the names of the saints whom José's family had most delighted to honour. Eventu-

ally the young peasant swore himself to secrecy by the holy Gospels; by the true faith of a Christian; by Nossa Senhora dos Remedios de Lamego; by San Torquato of Guimarães; by San Braz; by San Pedro d' Alcantará; by the Pope's three crowns; by his mother's memory; and by his own hopes of eternal salvation. Antonio felt a qualm or two in enouncing such a formula: but did not the success of his life's work demand that José should be held back from his own impulsiveness by every chain his faith could forge?

When the oaths had been sworn, Antonio went to the door. The rain had ceased and a few stars were glinting weakly in the watery sky.

'Hadn't you better go, while it is fair?' he said to José. 'Never mind about the clothes. Bring them back when your own are dry, and we will finish our talk.'

But José did not hasten forth. 'If you please, Father,' he said awkwardly, 'I'd . . . I'd rather stay here.'

'Stay here?'

'Yes. I'd like to be your servant, Father. And I'd like to learn to be a monk.'

Antonio stopped on the brink of half-derisive, half-angry laughter. He remembered the apostle's injunction: 'Strengthen the feeble-minded.' This dull-witted hind had acted, after all, like a Christian hero; and Antonio suddenly said to himself: 'He has the mind of a little child; but of such are the Kingdom of Heaven.'

'A monk, José?' he echoed, kindly. 'Not yet, I fear. Why, only to-night you tried to murder me.

Even Saint Dominic, who founded his Order to fight against the enemies of our religion, would not have approved of you up there in the rain. But you say you would be my servant. How? What about your own farm?'

'They cheated me out of it, Father—the lawyers. I got only two hundred milreis. I work at a cooper's in Navares: but it is all indoors, and trade is so slack he only keeps me on out of charity. He would be glad if I didn't darken the door again. I would like to be your servant.'

Antonio walked once more to the door and looked out. The sky was clearing. High in the East, encircled by creamy cloud-banks, he could see one stretch of blue, as blue as a tarn set deep in mountain snows; and in the midst of it shone a great soft star. Then he remembered that this was the feast of the Three Kings. He recalled the antiphon he had recited in the day's Office, *Stella ista sicut flamma coruscat:* 'Like as a flame doth that Star sparkle and sheweth God, the King of Kings. The Wise Men beheld it, and to the great King they offered their gifts.' Ought he, Antonio, to offer as gifts to the King his dearly-prized solitude, his monastic silence, his studious privacy, in order that he might reward this simple soul and shield it from the world? He first bowed his head; then raised it to the star, craving heavenly light.

'Can I stay, Father?' persisted José, doggedly.

'You can stay,' said Antonio, with his eyes still fixed on the star in the East.

III

José stayed. Before February came in, he was a changed man. The unshared secret of the buried boxes had been too big and too heavy for his rustic wits, and had forced him into an unnatural attitude of taciturnity and suspiciousness. But no sooner had he shifted the burden of responsibility to Antonio's broad shoulders than his innate gaiety returned. The war, his wounds, his mother's death, and the loss of his farm had conspired to congeal José's heart and to seal his lips; and for years he had not sung a song right through. But one sunny morning, as he was working among the orange-trees, a knot in his brain seemed to slip free, and he began to pipe like a bird.

Antonio did not regret his sacrifice. José was an all-round farmer, with an eagerness for work which made him worth his weight in silver. In his native parish of Pedrinha das Areias he had learned the art of treating vines after the fashion of the growers in Collares, the famous vine-land near Cintra. In order to profit by his skill, Antonio bought, for thirty pounds, a straggling parcel of land alongside the Atlantic. There José and he planted chosen vines. The leafless canes, protruding from the sand, wore a hopeless look in winter: but they were well-rooted in the subsoil, and, when the summer suns began to burn, a covering of sand six feet thick kept the roots so moist and cool that

the leaves were green and fresh long after the other vines looked parched and dry.

Antonio, however, was grateful for José not only as a farm-servant, a fellow-vintner, and a cooper. More than once, while the peasant's cheerful voice was carolling out old songs of love and war, Antonio found himself saying, '*Non est bonum esse hominem solum*: "It is not good for man to be alone." After all, I am a monk and not a hermit.'

José's quarters were in the outbuildings, where he enjoyed a bedroom much larger and more cheerful than his master's. He ate his morning meal alone: but, when the day's work was over, the two men dined together in the principal room of the farm-house. Dinner was always served ceremoniously. Even on fast-days, when it was merely an eight-ounce supper of wine and dark bread, both master and servant put on black coats and soft white collars. After dinner Antonio generally sat down to read. He subscribed to two English periodicals—a weekly paper and a quarterly review—so that, in the event of his visiting England again, he might not be out of touch with his hosts' thought and life. Meanwhile José would sit near the lamp or the window, carving one of the new bits of furniture with which he was gradually beautifying the little house. Later in the evening, a blackboard was produced and Antonio proceeded with José's education.

As a schoolmaster Antonio was unconventional. José could neither read nor write his native language: but the monk began by teaching him Latin. He taught José to form large capital letters, which came much easier than a cursive script to his rough hands. At the very first lesson the pupil learned how to write, spell,

and pronounce *pater* and *mater*, and how to translate these words in the light of the Portuguese *padre* and *madre*. Within a week, having mastered the present indicative of *amo* and also the first and second declensions of nouns, he could print on the board *Pater amat filium*, with the Portuguese equivalent *O padre ama o filho* in the line below. Antonio omitted mention of exceptional genders or inflexions, and discreetly concealed the existence of the subjunctive mood. He did not attempt to impart the Latin of Cicero but only a rough-and-ready *lingua rustica* which he hoped to transmute at his leisure into the language of the Missal and the Breviary.

Pride in his classical scholarship led José, one day of Lent, into an indiscretion. Upon a barn-door he carved deeply with his knife 'Pater Antonius' in big letters and 'Josephus' in smaller characters underneath. Antonio made him place a new panel in the door, after cutting out and burning the old one; and, at the same time, he reminded him sternly how he had sworn never to let fall the remotest hint that his master was a monk.

To guard against any fatal slip of José's tongue, Antonio forbade his servant from that hour to call him Father in any circumstances whatsoever. José's face fell, and he said dolefully:

'I'd been hoping, Father—I mean, Senhor—to make my Easter confession to your Reverence—I mean, to your Worship. Yes, and I'd been hoping that your Rever—that your Worship might be saying his Easter Mass in the abbey chapel and that I might serve it.'

Antonio knew that he would only bewilder the honest fellow's mind if he attempted to explain confessors' faculties; and that it would be still worse to

admit that he, though a choir-monk, had not yet said his first Mass. So he simply shook his head, and replied :

'No, José, we must fulfil our Easter duties, both of us, in the parish church. These are bad times for monks in Portugal. And remember, above all, that you must give up calling me "Your Reverence" and "Father."'

Nevertheless the priest allowed the layman to share much of his religious life. Before they parted for the night they told their beads antiphonally. At dinner, when Antonio had said his Order's two-word grace before meat, *Benedictus benedicat*, he would edify José by relating some miracle or heroic act of the saint for the day. On the mornings of Sundays and days of obligation they tramped to the parish Mass together; and in the evenings they stole into the dim abbey and performed their pious exercises in choir.

In the autumn of that year the two men pressed seventeen pipes of rough wine. After putting aside two pipes for their own consumption they sold off the remainder for fourteen pounds. As a result of grafting upon old roots Antonio also pressed about a dozen gallons of good wine for his great experiment. This pressing he jealously cellared in a little cask, of José's making, which had been for months under daily treatment so that the wood should help rather than hurt the wine. Of course, the new vineyard on the sea-shore was too young to yield a harvest : but the plants waxed and throve exceedingly.

While Antonio was thus busied, another vintage was going forward almost under his eyes. One morning, about the middle of September, José rushed into the kitchen exclaiming that two women and three men

were openly and calmly picking the grapes in the neglected vineyards of the abbey, and that they had somehow opened the outbuildings where the wine-presses and vats were stored.

Antonio paced up and down the kitchen twenty times before he could come to a decision. As the secret guardian of the abbey, he could not ignore these trespassers, who, if they were unchallenged, might easily grow bolder until they committed some act of desecration. On the other hand, there were dangers attending his interference with people who might turn out to be acting in a legal manner. He decided, however, to go up to the abbey and use his own eyes. Before setting out he slipped into his pocket a good Havana cigar, one of a boxful which had been pressed upon him in England.

The foreman of the vintagers was sitting in the shade of the monastery buildings. smoking a pipe of Brazilian tobacco.

'Good days, Senhor,' said Antonio in a friendly tone. 'Your Worship is luckier than I am. I made the Fazenda an offer for this vineyard, and they didn't even ask me to sit down.'

'The Ministerio da Fazenda in Lisbon?' asked the foreman.

'No, in Villa Branca.'

The foreman laughed a meaning laugh. Antonio changed his ground.

'We're pressing about twenty pipes down there in the valley,' he said, pointing out the farm. 'But it's poor stuff. The vines have been neglected for years.'

'So have these,' the foreman grumbled. 'Yet we're expected to take home wine fit for the Queen.'

Antonio described his experiment in the vineyard on

the sea-shore, and asked for the foreman's opinion and advice so deferentially that the man was pleased and flattered. When the monk rose to go the foreman suddenly said:

'The Senhor mustn't say I told him. But I don't wonder the chief of the Fazenda at Villa Branca bowed him out. The chief takes every grape in this vineyard every year, by his own authority, without paying a vintem to anybody. That's how Portugal is robbed. We might as well have Dom Miguel back again.'

A burden rolled from Antonio's heart. So long as the Villa Branca official had an interest in snubbing off possible leasers or buyers the monastery would be safe. He readily promised never to reveal the source from which he had learned so spicy a secret; and, after deeply impressing the foreman by giving him a cigar which had truly seen both Cuba and England, he returned home.

The day Antonio received payment for the sale of his rough wine he tendered José his wages. In rural Portugal a servant's annual wages ranged from four and a half to five and a half pounds a year, with the addition of a coarse cloak every second year. Antonio offered José the price of a cloak and five pounds.

'This money,' said José, holding it in his hand, 'is taken from your Worship's savings—the money that's to buy back the abbey?'

'It is your own, fairly earned,' the monk responded. 'Mind you don't lose it. Have you a safe place to keep it?'

'Yes,' said José promptly. 'I shall bury it.'

Antonio laughed. 'You're like a fox,' he said. 'How many cemeteries have you?'

With some pride, José admitted, in mysterious tones, that he had three distinct and untraceable hiding-places, not counting the grave in the abbey-cloisters where he had buried the boxes. Becoming more at ease, he finally asked leave to ease his mind of an oppressive secret. Deep in a drift of sand near the new vineyard he had laid away one hundred pounds—the round remainder of moneys he had received for his horse and his farm and from a small legacy. Blushing at his own presumption, he begged Antonio to let him add this sum to the English pounds which his master was hoarding up for the abbey's redemption. Antonio, deeply touched, agreed to accept the money: but only on condition that José should be allowed a clear year in which to alter his mind.

Had Antonio been giving one hundred pounds instead of receiving it, José could not have been more grateful. But he had still something to ask.

'Since I saw those men and women up there in the vineyard, I'm not easy at nights,' he said. 'I'm thinking the boxes ought to be buried in our own garden. And, if I can have the cart and the bullock, I'll dig up everything I've got and bring it here.'

During the next dark night the two men opened the grave in the cloisters and brought away the boxes, which they reburied in a dry place within sight of José's window. The morning after, José set out in the bullock-cart, with a spade, a dark lantern, some sacking, and two empty barrels hidden under a heap of straw.

He was away two days. When he returned it was with so abashed an air that Antonio thought the hiding-places had been found empty. But the lifting of the straw told a different tale. Although José had lost his

farm, he had saved the household gods and heirlooms. There were two carved coffers filled with fine linen; a box of old Portuguese faience in which the Persian influence was still strong; five musty books of fusty piety; a fowling-piece, much more dangerous to the sportsman than to the game; and some great, round, solid, honest vessels of copper and pewter which shone, after José had polished them, like suns and moons.

IV

THREE years' hard labour turned Antonio's tangled vineyards and languishing orangeries into an earthly paradise. The red roses nearly covering the white walls of his golden-thatched farm-house, the round plot of well-kept turf in front, the bright flower-beds and the trim gate, gave quite an English appearance to the little farmstead. All the potsherds and rubbish had been removed from the bed of the stream, while the cascades and pools had been made fewer and grander. Trellises, pergolas, and arches everywhere shewed that José had been no less industrious than his master.

Up in the village the gossips had plenty of news to keep them busy. The successive arrivals of Antonio's wine-press from France, of his vine-slips from vineyards all over Europe, and of his books and papers from England, were so many nine-days' wonders. Fifty wild stories were set going as to his parentage, his past, and his prospects: but it never entered anybody's head that he had dwelt for years, almost in their midst, as a monk of Saint Benedict.

Antonio was regular in church-attendance: but he took care to conceal nearly all his piety. For example, he denied himself the consolation of occasionally serving the cura's Mass, lest his good Latin and his intelligent grasp of every point in the ritual should betray him. He communicated more frequently than was usual in the parish: but no one ever thought of numbering him

among those few devotees in the village who were profanely called *os beatos e as beatas*—the Saints and Blessed Ones.

What interested the parish much more than Antonio's religion was Antonio's prosperity. It became known that every hectare of his long-neglected vineyard was earning a hundred per cent more than any other hectare within ten leagues. It was also known that he was distilling a new kind of orange brandy for medicinal use, which he exported to Rio de Janeiro at a high price. Rumour said that, when his sea-sand vineyard should begin to bear fruit, Collares would sink to the second place. Most wonderful of all, it was known that the cellars at Antonio's farm contained some curious wooden racks in which two or three hundred bottles of blended white wine were standing on their heads. This blended white wine, according to a villager who did occasional work at the farm under José, was intended to rival French champagne, a famous but mysterious beverage which no native of the parish had ever drunk or seen.

Upon the undeniable fact of Antonio's prosperity the gossips naturally proceeded to erect fantastic prophecies about his matrimonial intentions. No tongues wagged concerning José. Had the gossips known of his hundred pounds, his copper and pewter and fine linen, the case would have been different; but, if they thought of him at all, they regarded him as a wild-eyed, eccentric boor who might go mad at any moment, and was certainly better without a wife to beat or murder. Antonio, however, was worth the gossips' while. During his first year in the parish they mentally married him off to Joanna Quintella, a widow who had lost her husband in the civil wars. Joanna was hardly thirty, had not

outlived all her good looks, and was possessed of nearly sixty pounds.

This was just after the monk had sold off his first pressing of wine for fourteen pounds. But, with the growth of his prosperity, his prospective brides advanced in importance. The gossips jilted poor Joanna and betrothed Antonio successively to Catharina Rodrigues de Barros Lopes, the farrier's second daughter; to Maria da Conceiçao d'Araujo, the cura's younger sister; and to Beatriz Amelia Martins, who had lived six months in Lisbon with her sister, the wife of a customs-house officer. But when it leaked out that Antonio went nearly every month to the bank in Villa Branca with drafts from Oporto, Rio de Janeiro, and even London, the match with Donna Beatriz was broken off.

Within the wide boundaries of the parish only one bride remained: but, for a time, not one of the gossips was presumptuous enough to link her name with Antonio's. Ever since she began coiling up her hair, it had been taken for granted that her father would have to go to Villa Branca or, at the very least, to Navares in order to find a sufficiently important husband for Margarida Clara Maria dos Santos Rebolla. When, however, the apothecary received an invoice from Lisbon charging him half a pound for a single bottle of champagne the maiden's fate was sealed. The inquisitive crowd who paid the apothecary three vintens a head for a spoonful of the champagne were disgusted with their bargain: but when the apothecary's arithmetic was applied to Antonio's case they recovered their spirits and unanimously made over Margarida Clara Maria to the young Crœsus of the valley who was about to gild the parish with glory.

Margarida's parents were not surprised on learning what the parish expected of them; for had they not already brooded long and earnestly over the same plan? Not to mention the Babylonian wickednesses of Villa Branca and Navares, town husbands were not acceptable to the worthy couple, because town fortunes, town incomes, town reputations, lay too much at the mercy of the politicians. Indeed, Senhor Jorge Maria dos Santos Rebolla held politics in so much horror that he would not seriously entertain the idea of Antonio as a son-in-law until he had satisfied himself that the young vintner was unpoisoned by factious doctrines.

Senhor Jorge made his enquiries in person. On an October afternoon, just after the heavier labours of the vintage were ended, he called upon Antonio and asked him to sign a petition for the replacement of a bridge which had been swept away on the terrible night of Antonio's fight with José. The monk received his visitor with honour and without suspicion. He knew him as an estimable lavrador, or large farmer: but he had never heard of Margarida. Outside his church-going, Antonio had no dealings with the village.

When the monk had subscribed his name of da Rocha to the petition, the lavrador thanked him and rolled it up.

'Not that it will do any good,' he added. 'In this parish we've never learned to crawl up the sleeves of politicians. Ah! When the last politician is dead, Portugal will come to life again.'

Antonio said nothing. But Senhor Jorge did not desist. To catechise a stranger about his political opinions was always a breach of good manners, and in

Portugal it was still dangerous. Nevertheless the lavrador continued:

'Senhor, everybody says you are a clever man. You have been in England and France and Spain and, some say, in Brazil. You have seen many things. I am not a Miguelista; but I want to know if we are any better off under the Liberals.'

Antonio took time to think. When he had decided that there was nothing to lose by frankness he said:

'Your Worship is older than I, and far wiser. But here is my answer. I, too, am no Miguelista. If Liberalism truly meant equal freedom and justice for all, I should be a Liberal. But Liberalism in Portugal is only a name. Your Worship speaks of England and France. I have travelled in those countries. One frosty morning, two hundred years ago, the English cut off their King's head with a sharp axe in the name of Liberty: but the Englishmen who did that deed equalled the king before long in oppression and intolerance. Fifty years ago, in the name of Liberty, some Frenchmen guillotined the King of France: but I have seen a French river where, a few months afterwards, the men who did that deed drowned barge-load after barge-load of those who held other opinions. Yes, your Worship. In a single town, in four months, nearly ten thousand were shot or drowned—more than the tyrant Miguel put to death in all Portugal, in all his unhappy career.'

'Then the Senhor does not believe in Republics?' asked the lavrador.

'If all our citizens were good and wise and in possession of the whole truth,' answered Antonio, 'a Republic would be the best form of government. But the Portuguese are no more fit than the French for such

an experiment. Nay, I will go further. The Portuguese are not ripe even for the English kind of Parliament. Our deputies are not the true choice of the people. They fill their pockets with the people's money; and their empty quarrels poison the nation's blood. But I have said too much. After all, what do I know of politics? I leave politics alone, and . . .'

He weighed his words. When he uttered them, they came softly and slowly.

'As for me,' he said, 'I hope to serve Portugal in some better way.'

The lavrador had not understood every word Antonio said, but he felt sure he was on the right side. He rose up with an approving nod and very modestly asked if he might have a sight of his host's famous vineyards and cellars.

Antonio, who was always willing to exhibit and explain everything to any serious enquirer, rich or poor, gladly consented. He made it plain, as they walked round the property, that he had introduced no novelties for novelty's sake, and he was able to give a good reason for every departure from local practice.

On the whole the lavrador was appreciative; but the champagne worried him. He would have preferred to see Margarida Clara Maria in the care of a husband whose wine-bottles stood on their heels and not on their heads. Still, inverted wine-bottles were less detestable than topsy-turvy morals or politics. Antonio seemed to be respectably but not excessively religious; he was healthy; he was industrious; he was unencumbered by relatives; and, best of all, he was successful. What more could be reasonably hoped for in a son-in-law? As Senhor Jorge said good-bye, he wrung

Antonio's hand with a bargain-sealing grip which surprised the monk exceedingly.

The very next Sunday enabled Senhor Jorge and Donna Perpetua, his consort, to open their campaign. During the cura's sermon bursts of rain began lashing at the south windows of the church, and it was raining smartly when Mass came to an end. José borrowed a grass-waterproof: but, although the servant could wear this peasant's garment, the master's dignity as a landed proprietor forbade him to do likewise. Senhor Jorge seized his opportunity, and insisted that Antonio should take shelter in his house, which stood less than half a mile from the church.

Gossip nudged gossip and busybody winked at busybody as the two men hastened off together. But Antonio saw neither the nudges nor the winks; and he entered the lavrador's domain talking freely of farming and of weather.

The buildings which met the monk's eyes were not like a farm-house in England. As in England, they formed three sides of a quadrangle: but there the resemblance ended. The square yard was covered nearly three feet deep with gorse-litter. The buildings to the right and left housed cattle, horses, wine-presses, tools and stores of all kinds. The principal façade boasted two stories, the lower serving as a byre. The upper story made some architectural pretension. A broad flight of stone steps climbed up to it; and the front door was set back in a three-arched loggia.

As Antonio mounted the steps he saw that blue and white tiles lined the inside of the loggia and that the stone floor had been newly whitened. His host pushed open the nail-studded door, and they entered a large

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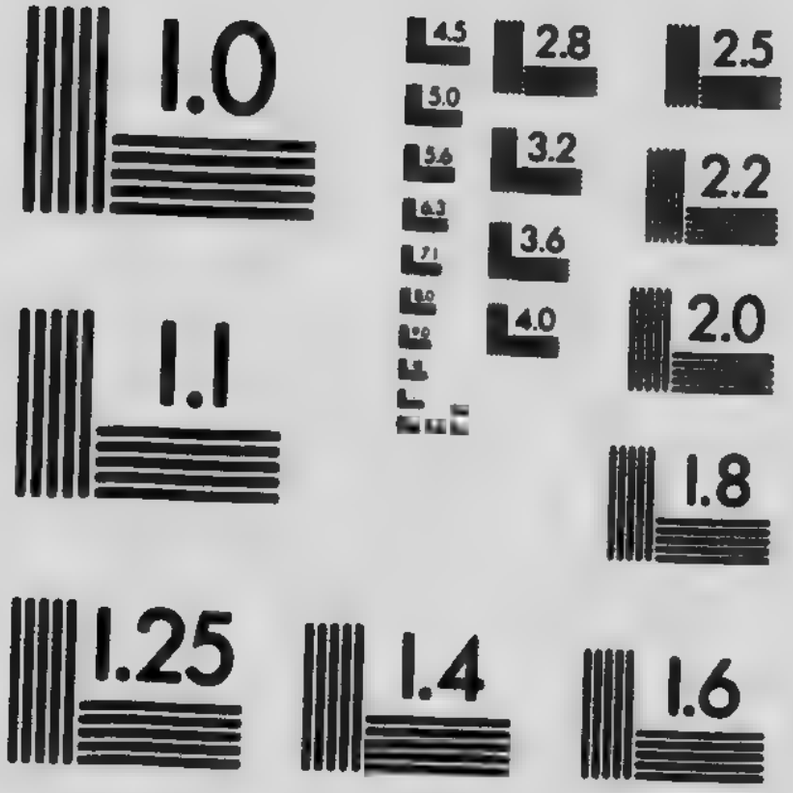

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room lit by three windows in the farther wall. Many doors and door-posts crowded the two side-walls; and Antonio knew that these were the entrances to bedrooms not much bigger than his own old cell at the abbey. There were a few pieces of strong old furniture and some pots and crocks even more imposing than José's: but there was no cheerful fire to dispel the rawness and gloom of the stormy autumn day, and, altogether, the place lacked comfort.

Donna Perpetua received Antonio with an attentive cordiality greatly exceeding the utmost a mere weather-bound churchgoer had a right to expect; but the monk ascribed her warmth to old-fashioned habits of hospitality. One after another her three sons, Luiz, Gaspar, and Affonso, strode into the room. After exchanging greetings with the visitor they sat down, side by side, and did not utter a word. Antonio turned to them more than once with remarks or enquiries: but he could get nothing in return save gasps, grins, and flushes. As Donna Perpetua and her husband were not much more at their ease, the conversation soon languished; and, when Antonio perceived that he was doing all the talking, it ceased altogether.

Strangely enough, the whole family appeared to regard the ensuing silence as a thing altogether natural and seemly, like a silence in church. When it had lasted long enough, Donna Perpetua arose from her chair in a curiously formal manner, and, going to one of the side doors, called out 'Margarida'! But the monk, although he was vaguely conscious that the others were preoccupied and constrained, still suspected nothing.

The door opened, and Margarida Clara Maria dos

Santos Rebolla came forward into the meagre light. Antonio recognised her at once as a damsel he had often seen kneeling on the church floor in the front row of women. So far as his thoughts had ever engaged themselves with her, she had interested him by her dark eyes and by the country bloom on her olive skin. He remembered how, that very morning, she had pleasantly filled in the picture of rustic piety.

Antonio rose as she entered. He saw that her head was rather less attractive without the black lace mantilla she always wore in church. Her face was a little too broad and her abundant hair was braided too tightly. But, to make up for the mantilla, Margarida had adorned her person with unfamiliar splendours. Of her fine lawn camisole only the snowy sleeves could be seen. The rest was hidden by an over-bodice richly embroidered in many-coloured wools. Her ample apron was even more magnificent than the bodice. Its bold stripes, triangles, circles, stars and crosses stood out nearly a quarter of an inch from the velvet ground in wools of blue, orange, vermilion and green. The full skirt, rather short, revealed a pair of serviceable ankles. Margarida's ribbed stockings were white, and there was more embroidery on her velvet slippers. But the maiden's chief glory was her jewellery. Heart-shaped filigree ear-rings, of gold purer than an English sovereign, hung from her ears. These hearts were fully two inches long. Her three golden necklaces sustained two more filigree hearts, each as long as her longest finger, and a solid gold cross set with coloured stones. The greater part of her belt was also built up from traceried squares and circles of pure gold.

The monk feared that he had gazed too long and

curiously either at these gorgeous trappings or at their wearer; for Margarida suddenly blushed crimson from her topmost necklace to the roots of her black hair. Donna Perpetua pronounced a formula of introduction; but, overwhelmed by maidenly confusion, Margarida said nothing in answer to Antonio's few words. She fled to her mother's chair and huddled on a stool beside her.

There was another silence. But Antonio was unperturbed. Not only long years before, as a youth in Portugal, but also during his journey with young Crowberry, he had assisted at bourgeois and rich-peasant functions equally tiresome. Near Blaye, on the Gironde, and again at a *tertulia* in Valladolid, he had seen the men herding stupidly at one side of the room while the women clung together at the other. A look through the window told him that the rain had ceased; so he resolved to stay ten minutes more, for decency's sake, and then to go home.

'Down in the valley we are less gay than this,' he said to Donna Perpetua, without intending to be ironical. 'My man José and I are the only human beings within two miles.'

Donna Perpetua threw a glance at her husband, as if to remind him of some pre-arrangement.

'If the Senhor is lonely,' said the lavrador, 'he must come to our *serões*. On Thursdays, at the full moon. That means next Thursday, about seven o'clock. He will do us a great honour.'

'He will indeed,' added Donna Perpetua. 'And if he plays the mandoline let him bring it with him.'

Antonio knew that at the serões, or soirées, of Portuguese farm-folk there was much lore to be learned

which one might search for vainly in libraries. Besides, it would hardly be neighbourly to refuse an invitation so heartily given and so kindly meant.

'All the honour,' he said, 'is on the other side. I will very gladly come.'

Only at that moment did he discern the position. Donna Perpetua's glance at Margarida lasted not much longer than a flash of lightning; but, like a flash of lightning, it revealed the truth to Antonio. The furtive looks of Margarida's brothers, both at their sister and at one another, confirmed the revelation; and the evident relief and satisfaction of Senhor Jorge established it beyond a doubt.

Not without traces of hauteur in his manner and curtness in his speech Antonio thanked his hosts for their hospitality and took his leave.

V

The monk strode homewards with wrath in his heart. At both their encounters Jorge dos Santos Rebolla had deceived him by false pretences. Antonio now understood that the petition for the new bridge was merely an excuse for a spying visit to his little territory; and the lavrador's solicitude for the dryness of Antonio's skin was equally undisinterested. He had been trapped into a compromising position before all the eyes in the parish, and he could hardly get out of it without giving pain to the unoffending Margarida, annoyance to himself, and an opportunity to the gossip-mongers of the village.

Besides, the affair was a blow to Antonio's pride. He had often recalled, with some complacency, his skilful treatment of the young English beauty who gave him the hot-house flower, as well as his tact towards other great ladies who had failed to dissemble their regard. Yet here he was, enmeshed in the first net which a pair of rustic match-makers had troubled to spread. Again, if a Francisco Manoel Oliveira da Rocha were free to wed, it would not be with a daughter of Senhor Jorge.

He swung down the muddy track slashing murderously with his thin English walking-stick at the wet brambles. But Father Antonio had not ceased to be a monk. Every night he examined his conscience, and nearly all day long, in his endeavour towards perfection,

he maintained a keen-eyed watch against the approaches of sin. So he reined in his bitter thoughts with sudden strength, and set himself to analyse their causes. Experience had taught him how easily un-Christian pride can be confused with righteous anger.

Before his trim white house rose into sight Antonio re-entered the state of grace, and was once more in love and charity with all his neighbours. The results of Senhor Jorge's proceedings were bound to be gravely embarrassing; but his motives, after all, could not be called disgraceful. It was a father's duty to secure his daughter's happiness; and Antonio could not deny that Senhor Jorge's choice implied a certain compliment to himself. Again, the lavrador could not be blamed for the devices he was using to press the business forward. No one, save José, knew that a Benedictine monk was living on the borders of the parish; and probably Senhor Jorge thought he was doing a shy young bachelor a service by taking charge of the courtship.

These charitable thoughts towards the people who had drawn Antonio into a mess did not, however, help him to get out of it. The slight coldness and stiffness of his farewells could hardly have been noticed by Donna Perpetua and the family. And on Thursday they would expect him at their serão. What was he to do?

According to the cowardly and selfish rules of worldly prudence, his only safe course was to sham some illness or to invent some bogus call of business which would enable him to evade the serão. But such ways were not Antonio's. He had given his promise and he meant to keep it. Indeed, reflection convinced him that the

serão would give him his best opportunity of putting an end to the affair. Outside the church Senhor Jorge had publicly compromised Antonio; at the serão Antonio would publicly put himself right again. The parish should see that he was not a woman-hater and a hermit: but the parish should see, also, that he was not a marrying man.

About eight that night, as master and man were returning from their usual Sunday evening exercises in the abbey chapel, Antonio told José that he had sheltered under Senhor Jorge's roof and that he had promised to assist at one of his serões. José tramped along without replying: but it was plain he had a comment to make.

'Is there something you want to say, José?' asked Antonio. 'If so, why don't you say it?'

After stumping on another twenty paces in silence José grunted:

'Senhor Jorge has a daughter.'

'I know. The Senhorita Margarida.'

Although they were a third of a mile from home José shut his mouth and did not open it again until they were in the house, with the door shut. Then he spoke.

'I ask pardon of your Reverence,' he began, using the forbidden title with unconcealed deliberation. 'Your Reverence is a holy monk. He understands Latin and French and English. He understands oranges and grapes, and winepresses and stills, better than anybody else in Portugal. But he doesn't understand all the ways of the world—especially young women.'

'While you, José,' retorted Antonio, 'understand all the ways of the world—especially young women—perfectly.'

'I don't, Father,' protested José in alarm, 'and nobody else, either—may God help us all! But I understand a thing here and a thing there. The truth is, Father——'

'Don't call me Father. The truth is what?'

'The truth is,' replied José, in a mysterious whisper, 'they want to find a husband for the Senhorita Margarida.'

'Go on.'

'Senhor Jorge wants to find some one rich—like your Worship. And Donna Perpetua wants to find a born gentleman—like your Worship.'

'Not to beat about the bush,' Antonio interrupted, 'you mean that Senhor Jorge and Donna Perpetua want . . . me?'

José admitted it and began apologising for his presumptuous interference; but Antonio cut him short by saying:

'You have done quite right to talk with me like this. Thanks. Never ask pardon for speaking plainly. Now we will eat our bread.'

It was the custom of the two men to dine on Sundays before going up to the abbey, and to eat a small broa, dipped in wine, on their return. They sat down to this simple supper, without any more words about Margarida, and confined themselves to arranging the farm-work for the morrow. At half-past eight José lit his lantern and went off to bed.

The monk made no haste to follow his example. The room was chilly after the rain: so he kindled a fire of cork-cuttings and walnut-shells. It blazed up lustily, and José's copper and pewter reflected the cheerful light. Antonio blew out the useless candle, drew a chair up to the warmth, and sat down.

Outside, the stillness was profound. José, no doubt, had already fallen asleep. No dog barked, no bird of night cried. Even the Atlantic lay hushed.

From the heart of this silent loneliness the spirit of Antonio fared forth, craving the company of living men. He thought first of his old companions, the fathers and brethren of his Order; of the Abbot, of the Cellarer, of Sebastian, of Cypriano. But it was little more than an hour since he had walked past the doors of their abandoned cells and had sat in the midst of their empty stalls; and, try as he might, he could only think of them as impalpable ghosts hovering over the dim and deserted abbey. Then he tried to think of Crowberry, of the young Queen Victoria's nonchalant Comptroller, of the clean-shaven, wiry, iron-willed Duke. But England seemed ever so far away, on the other side of a thousand miles of rain and darkness; and only one memory stood up warm and clear. It was the memory of that summer evening, when the vane on the grey church tower burned like a flame and when the blue smoke from the cottage hearths and the children's merry cries had suddenly turned the exile sick with yearning for love and home.

Yes. Although all other English memories were faint, that one scene rebuilt itself before his mind's eyes, solid, richly coloured, vocal. He saw once more the cattle knee-deep in clear, purling waters beside the steep old bridge, and he heard the rooks cawing. It was so like a happening of yesterday that he remembered even the chaff of Mr. Crowberry about his Portuguese sweetheart, Teresa or Dolores or Luiza, or Carmen or Maria.

Maria. Margarida was named Maria. Margarida Clara Maria. The syllables resounded in his brain like

tinkling cymbals. They revived that morning's experiences in the lavrador's house with so full an actuality that Antonio's mind-painting of the golden English village faded into grey and brown. Margarida. When Donna Perpetua called out her name she had stepped forth; and now, once more, as Antonio breathed it, she seemed to be advancing through the lonesome byways of his heart.

Perhaps the Rebollas were discussing him at that very moment. He tried to imagine Senhor Jorge holding forth to his trio of inarticulate sons. But he failed. The picture which his imagination persisted in painting was a picture of Donna Perpetua talking to Margarida.

Donna Perpetua, like Senhor Jorge and the three dumb dogs of sons, was doubtless a worthy creature. But the picture looked better without her. Again, the comfortless living-room of the lavrador made an unamiable background. Antonio's fire of cork-bark and nut-shells had sunk from a blaze to a glow, and the bright eyes of the polished copper vessels no longer winked and peeped down upon his privacy. But the unwonted warmth, after the long walk in the fresh air and his draught of generous wine, made him drowsy. His will was no longer supreme. And so it came to pass that a soft dream-shape stole in upon him and sat down on the other side of the hearth. Margarida.

Her presence seemed good to Antonio. Her voice, her cheeks, her arms, her movements were soft and gentle. She had great, mild, stupid, kind eyes, like the eyes of the contented English kine beside the steep stone bridge. Margarida was brainless: but her brainlessness rested his own brain weary with plans and fears. Sitting beside her, without speaking, brought

healing to his fretted spirit. Margarida did not challenge the soul to high romantic passion. She sat there not like a proud maiden to be wooed and won through stress and storm but more like a comely, cosy, docile, loving young matron. Antonio, ever drowsier and drowsier, surrendered himself more and more completely to unheroic peace. He had battled for long years in the teeth of bitter winds and icy currents: but at last he yielded himself up to the deliciousness of drifting down a summer stream, warmed by the sun and hardly ruffled by scented zephyrs.

Margarida seemed to have come nearer. She was at the farther end of the hearth no longer, but was sitting on one of José's carved coffers at his side. All the room felt soft and silken. As Antonio's drowsy eyes closed, his right arm sought Margarida's waist that he might gently draw her to his breast. . . .

He awoke in an instant and started up with a cry. For two or three moments his wits went on sleeping, and he could not say if he breathed in heaven or on earth or in hell. The fire had almost died out, and he would have been standing in complete darkness if two dull, red eyes had not stared at him from the hearth. Antonio pressed agonising hands against his throbbing temples and moaned a broken prayer.

As he came to himself the door was flung open and José rushed in with a lantern. He had heard the cry.

'It is nothing,' said Antonio. 'I fell asleep in my chair, and I had . . . I had a kind of nightmare.'

'It's these new-fangled French wines of your Worship's,' José grumbled. 'Give me honest green wine, old-fashioned Portuguese. It drowns your nightmares before they are born.'

VI

Antonio kept his promise and took part in the Thursday serão at the farm of Senhor Jorge.

The monk's robust common-sense would not suffer him to be tormented by false scruples. On the preceding Monday, when he accomplished his daily duty of self-examination, he had not failed to recall his Sunday night's surrender to the dream-maiden: but a well-instructed conscience acquitted him of blame. Antonio knew how to distinguish between the deliberate thoughts or imaginations of his waking moments and the unbidden guests of his dreams. Under the saintly Abbot he had studied perfection in a manly school where morbid super-sensitiveness could not exist an hour: and he was too keenly alive to his real faults to accuse himself of fanciful sins. His drowsy, involuntary pleasure in the shadowy Margarida's presence was not sin; it was only home-sickness. All the same he did not wish the vision to return: and therefore he began to lay a new emphasis on the lines *Procul recedant somnia, Et noctium phantasmata*, when he recited the Compline hymn.

Having first ascertained that local usage permitted him to do so, Antonio took José with him to the serão. The servant wore his Sunday clothes; the master his second-best. Both of them were glad that they had spent some pains and time on their appearance; for they were joined, half-way, by a fellow-guest in all the

glory of feast-day raiment. In the bright moonlight they recognised this sumptuous personage as one Emilio Domingos Carneiro, the eldest son of a small farmer. Although he was on foot, he was apparelled for proud feats of horsemanship. Bright spurs stood out from his tall jack-boots, and he wore a horseman's jacket of black cloth, felted. His fine white shirt was fastened by silver buttons, and a light red sash topped his tight breeches. To make up for the steed which he did not possess, Emilio carried a business-like whip.

At a cross-road the party picked up Emilio's two cousins, Joaquina and Candida Carneiro. These strapping damsels wore green cloth skirts, large green silk kerchiefs with the ends drawn cross-wise over their camisoles, and aprons of many colours. Their hats were enormous. If the brims had not been caught up to the pork-pie crowns by means of blue and yellow cords, they would have measured three feet in diameter.

As Antonio neared the threshing-floor where the serão was to be held, he noticed with satisfaction that not many of the guests had arrayed themselves after the fashion of the resplendent Carneiros. Most of those present had come to work as well as to play, and they were dressed accordingly.

Donna Perpetua and her husband welcomed Antonio with proprietary airs. Towards José they were sufficiently gracious, and Donna Perpetua expressed her pleasure at the sight of the speechless fellow's mandoline. Luiz and his brothers were already hard at play on the threshing-floor; but of Margarida nothing was to be seen. Perhaps, thought Antonio, she was sitting among the group of young men and women who were

husking maize on the sheltered side of the threshing-floor.

The night was warm and balmy. From the south-west a few clouds had begun to rise: but the round moon was riding free, high among the sparkling stars. A tinkling of guitars and the chattering and light laughter of youths and maidens rippled the surface of the enormous silence. The scene was almost as bright as day. Here a girl's gold ear-ring, there a man's buckles or buttons of old silver, caught and flung back the faërie light. Some of the older women were spinning. Eight-pointed wooden wheels whirred round, buzzing like bees. A youth as handsome as a god lolled on a log, carving an ox-yoke. Where the maidens sat all together, the colours were like peacocks' tails and rainbows; and it was there that the moonlight lingered wantonly on plump arms and little ivory hands.

A clapping of palms proclaimed the end of the game, and Luiz made haste to begin another. He and Affonso climbed up two poplars, one on the north side of the threshing-floor, the other on the south; and to these trees they tied the two ends of a thin rope, so as to stretch it at a height of eight or nine feet from the ground. Before making his end fast, Luiz passed it through the handle of a coarse brown jug. Descending to the ground, he picked up a six-foot clothes-prop, made from the dried stalk of a giant cabbage, and with this he shoved the jug along the rope until it dangled absurdly over the centre of the floor. Then he produced a clean white handkerchief and sang out for the first player.

The youth who had been carving the ox-yoke dropped his work and leapt into the ring like a Greek athlete

into the arena. Everybody clapped hands again. The handkerchief was bound over his eyes and the light pole was placed in his hand. Luiz turned him three-quarters round; clutched his arm and walked him half-a-dozen paces this way and that; and then, retreating to the edge of the floor, began to count a hundred, loudly and quickly.

The handsome youth, with self-confidence apparent in his every limb and muscle, stepped back, swung the pole round his head, and smashed mightily at the point where he thought the jug was hanging. Empty air received the blow, and a burst of laughter mocked him. Luiz went on counting, and many of the older people counted with him, aloud. At forty the youth struck again; but he was all at sea, and he was marching farther away from the line. At seventy, eighty-five, ninety he slashed thrice more; and at a hundred he dragged off his bandage to find that he had walked nearly off the threshing-floor on the farther side. Amidst applause, he came back, smiling pleasantly, and resumed his carving of the yoke.

Emilio was the next to try. This was his great game, and the four blows he struck were all within a yard of the jug. Once he missed it by less than a hand's breath. But Emilio was not in luck, and he uncovered his eyes a little sulkily, only recovering his good spirits when six or seven players in succession failed more signally than himself.

At last José put himself forward. Never having seen the sport before, he had been loud in ridicule of Emilio and the other pole-wielders. His career was short and inglorious. He cut fiercely at nothing before Luiz could count five. Then, losing his head, he advanced rapidly

towards the bevy of young women, brandishing his weapon and laying about him right and left. The girls sprang up screaming and took to flight. At thirty-seven José's feet struck a heap of maize-leaves and he came down tremendously, full length among the cobs. This was the kind of climax to delight the rural mind; and the night was rent by shouts and shrieks of laughter.

Unhappily José was not a good loser. He struggled to his feet with that wild tigerish rage in his eyes which Antonio had seen before; and if his master had not sprung to the rescue and murmured words in his ear there would have been trouble.

'It's nothing,' said Antonio. 'It's only a game. Stay here, where you are. And give me the handkerchief. I'll try myself. Watch me while I make a bigger fool of myself than all the rest of you put together.'

The girls came flocking back as Antonio, advancing to a spot exactly under the jug, submitted to the bandaging of his eyes. He became conscious, at once, of a different mood in the spectators. Nearly all the gabbling ceased. Everybody was gazing curiously at the mysterious Senhor Francisco Manoel Oliveira da Rocha, the man who had trod the golden streets of London, the man who caused bottles of wine to be worth three milreis each by standing them upon their heads, and, above all, the man who was going to marry Margarida dos Santos Rebolla.

The counting began. To the blindfolded man it had an uncanny sound; for nine-tenths of the onlookers were chanting the numbers with Luiz in a subdued, expectant sing-song. But he kept his senses about him. During the few moments while Luiz was turning him round and pushing him about, Antonio had bent his

whole mind to the business of smashing the jug. Not that he expected or even wished to smash it. On the contrary, he had come forward determined to fail. But it was part of his nature to do with all his wits and might whatever he took in hand.

Luiz bawled out twenty before Antonio made his first stroke. He did not touch the jug; but neither did he thwack the vacant air, for he distinctly felt the rebound of the pole's tip from the rope. He moved a pace to the right and struck again; but the pole encountered nothing. Meanwhile he knew that he had come near to victory, because the sing-song of the spectators had suddenly grown sharper and more excited. He went back half a step and swept the space above him with a curving stroke as Luiz reached sixty-three.

So uproarious a shout arose that Antonio did not hear the jug break, and he thought for half a second that, in fulfilment of his prophecy to poor José, he had made himself the supreme fool of the evening. But, a twinkling later, the broken pieces crashed loudly at his feet, and, in the same moment, he knew that the intolerable counting had ceased. Somebody rushed forward to loosen the bondage; and, as it fell from his eyes, he saw Margarida standing with a beaming face among the young women.

Before he could greet her, a general stampede whirled Margarida out of sight. The younger guests were rushing to take up positions for a new sport in which all could join. Emilio explained to Antonio that it was to be a game of rounders, played with a clay pot instead of a ball. This little pot, such as could be bought any fair-day for a vintem, had no handle. It was of red

clay, baked thin and brittle. The players stood round in an extended circle.

Donna Perpetua, as the hostess, led off by throwing the pot to Emilio; but, as soon as he had caught it, she resumed her place among the matrons. Emilio, after taking aim fixedly at Joaquina Carneiro, who was close at hand on his right, turned suddenly on his heel and tossed the clay to Rosalina Saldanha, a graceful blonde who was far away on his left. These ruses and pretences were the salt of the game. The bowl flew spinning through the air in less than two seconds: but Rosalina was on the alert, and she caught it with her two slender hands amidst applause.

Clouds from the south-west were mounting higher, but the moon still shone brilliantly. Under the trees a lazy guitarrist went on strumming his thin, moonlight music, as crisp as hoar-frost and tinkling like icicles. Whenever the pot was flung high, fifty bright eyes saw, up above it, the planets and the stars; but the players were too young and too happy to moralise. In their unstudied attitudes they made up a picture full of rhythmic grace.

Four times the pot hurtled its way to José; and four times he caught it before it touched the ground. At the fourth catch, he returned it like lightning to Emilio; and Emilio spun it slowly and gracefully into the hands of Margarida.

Margarida paused, clasping the red clay in fingers which were less slender than Rosalina Saldanha's, but whiter. Every eye was fixed upon her. She knew that she ought to toss the bowl to one of her brothers, or to a young woman, or to one of the older men. But an irresistible impulse moved her another way; and, with

glowing cheeks and radiant eyes, she sent it curving across the space which separated her from Antonio.

Had it dashed like a stone from the catapult-hand of José or flashed like a meteor from the palm of Emilio the monk could have caught the pot. But Margarida's action took him unawares. What was he to do? When the pot was in his hand, how was he to treat her public act of favour? If he should——

His thinking was over in a flash; but it was too late. He plunged at the pot clumsily and missed his catch. The pot struck the hard floor and broke into a hundred pieces.

As a rule the smashing of the pot was the signal for a burst of mocking merriment. But instead of a light-hearted uproar there was an awe-struck silence. Everybody seemed to recoil from a sinister omen. Two more pots stood on a log, in readiness for the second and third rounds of the game; but no one stirred a step to fetch them. Antonio's gaze involuntarily followed the general movement and rested on the face of Margarida. The glow was gone from her cheeks, the light from her eyes. Very pale, she turned away.

A weak gust of wind rattled two or three dead leaves across the threshing-floor and a few cold drops fell from the darkening sky.

'The lamps are lighted in the barn,' cried the voice of Senhor Jorge. 'Come in, all of you, before the rain.'

VII

SENHOR JORGE'S lamps were not as bright as full moons. Their smoky flames lit up the vast barn so feebly that candles had to be set at the elbows of the knitters and stitchers and spinners. The spattering of the rain against the dusty windows made a dreariful sound.

There were games that could be played in a barn every bit as gay as the games of the open air. But the merry-makers had lost their good spirits, and nobody gave a lead towards recovering them. One by one the maids and youths sat down on full sacks or empty barrels, or squatted on the ground. When all were seated Donna Perpetua very politely begged José to tune his mandoline and to sing a fado, or love-song.

For the sake of the young people, Antonio felt glad. More than once he had heard José singing folk-songs which would have brought smiles to the faces of the most austere; and he took it for granted that José would break out with one of these rollicking lays. José, however, succumbed to the surrounding depression. Having tuned his mandoline, which was unusually large and sonorous, he began playing a doleful prelude.

Had his mind been free to enjoy it, Antonio would have found the music brimful of charm. The descending minor scale was occasionally, but not always, used in ascending passages, and the monk could not doubt that José had received some tradition of tonality which

urban ears would have rejected with ignorant scorn. As José played on, it seemed that he changed the scale more often than the key. At last he subsided into a more familiar gamut and began to sing in slow and mournful tones:

'O! fountain weeping softly,
Thou canst not weep for ever:
But the full fountains of my tears
Shall be congealéd never.

'O! weep, my eyes, and weep, my heart,
Bereavéd and forsaken;
Weep as the holy Virgin wept
The night her Son was taken.

'Alas! the sadness of my life.
Alas! my life of sadness;
Would I had wings to fly with thee,
O Swallow, Bird of Gladness!

'O Eagle! flying up so high,
Upon thy strong wings fleet me;
O Eagle! lift me to that sky
Where she prepares to greet me.'

José ceased singing, but went on playing. Although a printed page of music meant no more than so many black lines and dots and rings to his untutored mind, he was a musician to his finger-tips, and he could expound to others in tones many an emotion which he could not express even to himself in words. Unlike most Portuguese performers, whose melodic phrases were short-winded and very conventionally joined to-

gether, he was capable of trailing out long-drawn melodies and of welding them into forms of his own. José's huge fingers stroked the strings so subtly that the monk could almost see the eagle urging up, up, up, above the purple serras, above the moon and stars, until it swept on unwearied wings through the gates into the City.

But Antonio could not give himself up to watching the great bird's flight. He was painfully conscious that he and his man were killing the serão. In breaking the bowl he had almost broken poor Margarida's heart; and here was José driving everybody down into the depths of the blues. He glanced apologetically towards Donna Perpetua: but the candle on the trestle-table beside her lit up the unshed tears in her grey eyes so weirdly that he hastened to gaze upon the ground.

José's threnody ended at last, and he stumped back to his place without the slightest acknowledgment of the listeners' chastened applause. From a corner one of the guitarrists struck up a lively dance-tune; but his notes sounded so thin after José's that he broke off of his own accord. To save the situation, Antonio plunged in desperately and asked if Donna Perpetua knew any riddles.

Yes. Donna Perpetua knew several.

'Who is it,' she asked, 'that knows the hour but not the month; that wears spurs but never rides a-horse; that has a saw but isn't a carpenter; that carries a pick-axe but isn't a quarryman; that delves in the ground but gains no wages?'

Antonio could not guess: but his ignorance was covered up by a general shout of 'The cock!'

'Good,' cooed Donna Perpetua. 'Now explain this:

"Before the father is born the son is climbing up to the roof."'

'Smoke!' roared everybody.

'What is born on the mountain,' she continued, 'and comes to sing in the house?'

The shrill voices of the old women were loudest in the chorus of 'A spindle!'

'And who is it who is born on a dunghill, yet comes to eat with the king at his table?'

'A fly!' was the immediate unanimous answer.

Donna Perpetua beamed benevolently upon the company. It had pleased her to be made prominent. The guests were equally pleased: for had they not shown the brightness of their wits, or, at the very l[e]ast, of their memories? Antonio was entertained in a dif[f]erent way. These cut-and-dried riddles and answers reminded him of a village school which he had visited in England and of the joyous heartiness with which the rosy-cheeked boys and girls, in answer to the teacher's question, 'What is hell?' roared out, 'It is a bottomless and horrible pit, full of fire.'

By way of returning the compliment, Donna Perpetua invited Antonio to propound one or two of the riddles he had heard in England. Unguardedly he gave consent: and only when he began racking his memory did he perceive his mistake. He had heard a feeble riddle in a country house about a door being a jar; but the pun could not be made in Portuguese. Again, he knew by heart a rhymed enigma, said to be Byron's, on the letter H; but this was worse still. Apart from the Portuguese having no aspirate, how could he render the line ''Twas whispered in heaven, 'twas muttered in hell' into a language which spelt heaven with a 'o'

and hell with an 'i'? At last he cut short a very uncomfortable silence by saying that the only English conundrums he knew could not be translated. At this remark the girls hung their heads modestly and the matrons gave silent thanks that they had not been born in an apostate country where the very riddles brimmed with blasphemies and lewdne

'England is no good,' grunted Emil e had been playing a tune on his jack-boots with handle of his whip. 'The English have plenty of m y ; but they live dogs' lives. In England there are o fruits, no flowers. They have no wine save what e send them from Portugal. When the rain stops there is a fog. No Englishman ever sees the sun.'

'Things are hardly so bad as that,' said An nio, smiling. ' July and August I have known the sun in England shine ercely as any sun in Portugal. It is true there are no grapes or oranges, except those that grow in glass hot-houses; but the English h ve apples and pears, cherries and strawberri plum a sons, as fine as ours. Their flowers are wonderful; and I wish everybody in Portugal could see an English d ge.'

Emilio, whose father had suffered wron under Marshal Beresford during the Regency, thw d his boot again with the whip-stock and mumbled. Antonio was concerned. He and José had already gone far towards wrecking the serão, and he saw the necessity of avoiding a quarrel. So he added what he conscientiously believed, saying, in a conciliatory tone:

'The English are not the equals of the Portuguese. But they are a fine people and a great nation.'

'I have heard,' put in Senhor Jorge, 'that the English are not happy.'

'They were merry once,' Antonio answered, 'and they will be merry once more when they regain the Faith.'

'Yes,' said Donna Perpetua devoutly. 'Only those who are going to be happy in the next life can be truly happy in this.'

'Yet the English ought to be happy,' objected Senhor Jorge, growing restive at all this piety. 'They have the best government in the world.'

'Even the best government in the world is very bad,' Antonio retorted. 'Still, with all its faults, the English government is indeed the best in Europe. There is much more intrigue and corruption in their public life than they care to recognise; but one can get justice in their courts, and, except for Catholics, there is almost complete liberty. If we Portuguese had a government one half so good——'

A thin, short, bald, bent old man with a long white beard and madly bright eyes leapt out of the shadow and startled Antonio by shouting:

'Till he comes back there'll be no good government in Portugal. They'll go on being thieves and cowards. Yes, thieves. The French were thieves and bullies. The English were thieves and bullies too. Dom Miguel was the worst thief and coward of them all. As for the Queen——'

Antonio staunched the flow of eloquence before treason could burst forth.

'Whom do you speak of?' he demanded quickly. 'You say "Till he comes back." Who?'

While the old man stood glaring at the monk with trembling lips, Senhor Jorge bent over and whispered in Antonio's ear:

'Have patience with him, your Worship. He is a Sebastianist—the only Sebastianista for leagues around. On all other points he is saner than I am. He is a good man. I beg your Worship to indulge him.'

Antonio did more than indulge the hoary monomaniac. He strained forward, all ears. That there should be a Sebastianista left alive in Portugal amazed him. From the lips of a very old Jesuit he had once heard of some Sebastianistas in the forests of Brazil, and the Abbot had mentioned a Sebastianista whom he had seen, as a child, in the Açores. But a Sebastianista was the last curiosity Antonio had expected to meet at Senhor Jorge's serão.

'Tell us all about it,' he asked.

'Ah, your Excellency,' moaned the old man, 'I am a poor blacksmith and no scholar, and I cannot use fine words.'

'Don't some people believe,' asked Antonio, egging him on, 'that King Sebastião was killed by the Moors at the battle of al-Kasr al-Kebir? Don't they say his body rests in the church of the Jeronymos at Belem?'

'Lies, all lies!' cried the Sebastianista. 'Why were we beaten at Alcacer-Kibir by those hounds of infidels? Because they were braver or stronger? No. It was because we had sinned and the just God punished us. But I tell your Excellency that not one hair of the King's head fell to the ground. He departed unhurt from the battle. The tomb in the Jeronymos is emptier than this barrel.'

Unfortunately the barrel which the Sebastianista kicked with the iron tip of his wooden shoe gave back a blunt sound which proved that it was full. The girls began to titter; but the old man raved on, unabashed.

'Yes,' he cried, 'King Sebastião, the brave, the good, the Desired, escaped without a scratch on his body, although he had fought a hundred Moors hand-to-hand. He slew eighty with his own sword. He is waiting in the enchanted isle. Waiting, waiting, waiting. God knows things are bad enough in Portugal. But they will be worse. And when they are worst of all, he will come back. The Hidden Prince will come back, riding on a white horse. He will drive out the thieves and cowards. He will deal out justice to rich and poor alike. He will set up the Fifth Empire.'

'The Fifth Empire?' echoed Antonio, astonished at hearing such a phrase from such lips. 'What is the Fifth Empire?'

'It is the Empire which King Sebastião will set up,' said the old man.

'But, come now, Senhor Joaquim,' objected Emilio pertly. 'Isn't it rather a long time since King Sebastião went away? Tell us. How long ago?'

'It was before my grandfather was born,' snapped the old man, wheeling defiantly towards Emilio.

'Then when he comes back he'll be thrice as old as you are. He'll have no hair, no teeth, and he'll be as blind as a bat. So how much good will he be?'

'How much good will the King be?' bellowed the Sebastianista. 'How much good? Senhor Emilio Domingos Carneiro, I'll tell you. If he's an old man, thank God for that! Portugal has suffered enough from the young ones. And hark to this: He'll be a true old Portuguese. He'll be a man, not a dandy. He won't crack whips and wear spurs unless he can mount a horse without falling off on the other side.'

At this home-thrust most of the young men chuckled

or laughed outright, while the girls giggled. Donna Perpetua, however, was flurried and Emilio's cousins tried to protest. With ready tact Senhor Jorge preserved the peace.

'Come, Joaquim,' he said. 'Talking has made you thirsty. Come with me and I'll find you a mug of good wine to drink King Sebastião's health in.'

The old man, proud at having had the best of it, departed nimbly in his host's wake and was no more heard or seen.

'Does the Senhor believe that Dom Sebastião will ever return?' asked the handsome yoke-carver, turning to Antonio.

'I've just been reckoning,' the monk answered, 'that it is more than two hundred and sixty years since the day of the battle.'

Two hundred and sixty meant little to the handsome youth, who had never had occasion to engage his brains with any such number. He knew that he possessed ten fingers and ten toes, and that there were seven days in the week and that his father owned eight bullocks; but who had ever heard of such a number as two hundred and sixty? He stared at Antonio blankly.

'It seems to me,' put in José, 'that when we see Dom Sebastião on a white horse, it will be his ghost.

He uttered the word 'ghost' in a tone which made the pretty Rosalina Saldanha clasp her pretty hands and emit a pretty squeak. The other damsels squeaked after her, in chorus. They revelled in ghost-tales, although they dreaded them.

Antonio laughed.

'Your Worship may laugh,' railed Emilio, who seemed determined to shine in one way or another.

'But he wouldn't laugh if he saw what some people have seen.'

The girls cuddled together in delicious fright.

'Perhaps your Worship has not heard,' continued the dandy, feeling important, 'about the lobis-homem of Rio Briga, between Santarem and Thomar?'

Antonio had not heard of this particular case. But he was familiar with the lobis-homem or were-wolf superstition in general, and he detested it as a poisonous survival from dark and cruel days. He knew that, in remote mountain hamlets, this lingering pagan lie sometimes brought life-long anguish to the very unfortunates who most needed help and love. Involuntarily the monk's eyes sought Donna Perpetua's. He saw that she wished as little as he did to hear of were-wolves.

'Are not all tales of lobis-homens alike?' said Antonio to Emilio. 'Will not your Worship tell us another tale instead? I have heard that a Moorish maiden was once turned to stone up in these hills.'

'It's a tale for little girls,' snorted Emilio. Horror suited his narrative style better than romance. But he tried to recite the legend of a young peasant who heard one of the stones of the fountain cry out piteously. He went on to tell how the peasant released the Moor-maiden from the spell and married her; how she wrought him grief; and how her evil-spirit was cast out by a hermit. But Emilio's touch was heavy; and, as every one present knew the story by heart already, he bored his audience badly.

'Your Excellency lives almost by himself,' said a pleasant, middle-aged woman, pausing in her spinning and looking towards Antonio, 'so it is important he should be on his guard against the cock's egg.'

Antonio looked bewildered.

'Once every seven years,' she explained, 'the cock lays a tiny egg, as round as a marble and as black as ink. It is smaller than a pigeon's. As a rule the rats get it and no harm is done. But, if your Excellency has no rats, take care. If the egg is not destroyed a monster will come out of it. Perhaps you won't see him; but, wherever he is hatched, he causes the death of the master of the house within the year.'

She resumed her spinning. Antonio thanked her politely and promised that he would shew no mercy to any egg as black as ink and as round as a marble which he might find about his farm.

'You can't be always sure you've found the egg,' said the woman, pausing again. 'So it's a good thing always to leave a pair of scissors open on a shelf, especially at night.'

Antonio perceived that the open scissors made the sign of the Cross; and it thrilled him to find, in this peasant-woman's chatter about eggs and scissors, a miniature picture of the millennial struggle between heathenism and Christianity. For he had common-sense enough to understand that, while she held the Christian Faith with all her heart and mind, she was only half-serious about her grandsires' goblins and demons.

'Are open scissors good against anything else besides monsters out of black eggs?' asked José.

'Yes,' answered the spinner. 'They're good against witches.'

'I was hoping they might be good against ghosts,' grumbled José.

Antonio was surprised. José was still only half-

educated; but he had never before found him superstitious. As for the more serious guests, they were scandalised. The farrier's wife, Donna Catharina de Barros Lopes, who was a 'Blessed One,' said aloud:

'Thanks be to God there are no witches left! As for ghosts, there never were any.'

'Then the Senhora has never been up to the old abbey chapel on a dark night?' asked José doggedly.

Antonio could not believe his ears. As for the other guests, they sat up and bent forward, all sudden excitement. There were no more affected little squeaks from the maidens. All, even the men, were struck dumb at the news that a ghost walked within a league of Senhor Jorge's barn. Emilio Carneiro, whose farm was only a mile and a half from one of the abbey gates, turned white with terror.

'No,' answered the Blessed One curtly. 'I do *not* go, Senhor, up to the old abbey chapel on dark nights. And what is more, I don't intend to.'

'I am glad to hear it,' said José, with maddening slowness. 'The Senhora is better at home. And the rest of your Worships too.'

When the general excitement could no longer be suppressed, Senhor Jorge, who had just re-entered the room, demanded sternly:

'What is all this? Why are we better at home?'

'Because,' said José in awe-struck tones, 'it's very easy for us to talk and be brave here, in the light and in good company. But I don't think we should stay up there very long if we saw——'

'If we saw——?" urged six or seven voices.

'If we saw a monk, all in black, sitting in his stall, with a face as white as a curd cheese.'

Rosalina Saldanha screamed and collapsed into the stout arms of Joanna Quintella. Twenty people began talking at once, and bombarding José with questions.

'No,' cried Antonio loudly. 'No more. We've had more than enough of witchcraft and ghosts and superstition. Donna Perpetua—Senhor Jorge—I ask pardon for interfering.'

'Your Worship is quite right,' answered Senhor Jorge, with warmth. 'In my own house such talk is forbidden. We don't want the maids in hysterics. Luiz—Affonso—every one is dying of thirst and hunger. Where are the broas?'

The two young men, whose limbs were brisker than their tongues, jumped up and began filling roughly glazed and gaily painted jugs and mugs with green wine from a newly broached cask. Senhor Jorge was famous for his hospitality, and even José's ghost was forgotten for a moment in the good-tempered rough-and-tumble.

Margarida, who had remained invisible since the breaking of the bowl, now reappeared. She and her brother Gaspar each carried a basket of broas. These were not the plain work-a-day broas; they looked paler, because of an admixture of fine flour, and they were sweetened with honey and flavoured with spice. Gaspar began distributing his dainties at the far ends of the barn, while Margarida served the notables round the candles.

Antonio could not unlearn in a single moment his old habits; and therefore, when he took his broa from Margarida's hand, he thanked her with the softly strong tones and the momentary boldness of the eyes which, without his knowing or intending it, had captivated more than one high lady in England. If Donna Perpetua

or the farrier's wife or the spinner had offered the broa, he would have expressed his thanks in the same way. But poor Margarida found in his voice and glance a lover-like reverence, meant for herself alone. She forgot the evil omen of the broken bowl, and hurried away with rosy fires burning on her cheeks and love-lights dancing in her eyes.

VIII

When the serão was beginning to break up, Senhor Jorge asked Antonio into the house in order that he might judge some old wine. After it had been tasted and praised, the lavrador gazed at the monk wistfully and said:

'I hope the Senhor is not superstitious?'

'Superstitious? I hope not,' Antonio replied. 'And I promise, Senhor Jorge, that I will speak very plainly to my man José about that ridiculous ghost-story.'

'I wasn't thinking of your man José,' said the lavrador. And, after an awkward pause, he added: 'That clay pot. Your Worship failed to catch it. And just after the pot broke the sky was darkened. It . . . it upset my Margarida very much.'

Antonio's heart sank. Had Senhor Jorge been merely a selfish match-maker, bent on marrying off Margarida for his own profit, it would have been easy to rebuff him by silent contempt. But the monk knew that he was face to face with an honest Portuguese of the old school who was sacrificing pride to duty.

To gain time Antonio poured another spoonful of wine into the thin English glass. Having warmed it with his hand, he swirled it round, sniffed it, and held it up to the lamp. But he did not drink it. Replacing it on the table, he said:

'Have two or three minutes' patience with me, Senhor Jorge, while I perform one of the hardest tasks of a life

which has not been easy. For three years I have lived like a hermit. To-night is my first social recreation since I settled down in this parish.'

'Go on,' urged Senhor Jorge. His face was paler and his mouth twitched.

'My farm was a tangled wilderness. Our work claimed all our time. Now and again business took me to Navares or Villa Branca: but I hardly knew the names of half-a-dozen people in this village. Your Worship, I will come to the point. When you called at my farm I did not know you had a daughter. I had seen the Senhorita Margarida in church; but until her mother called her into our presence last Sunday I did not know she was yours.'

'You know now,' muttered the lavrador angrily. 'And I'd like to hear what's wrong with her. If any one has breathed a whisper against her I'll kill him with my own hands. Yes!' he cried, raising his voice, 'I'll do it as easily as I'd cut a pig's throat.'

'Not so fast,' said Antonio. 'I have not heard one word against Margarida. And I can use my eyes. I know she's as good as gold.'

'Then what's wrong? Out with it! Isn't she pretty enough for your Worship? Most people call her a beauty. Or are you afraid she won't have enough money?'

'Her beauty is so great that it would be wasted in an out-of-the-way corner like my farm,' said the monk, keeping his temper. 'As for money, it's the last thing in the world I should think of. But the truth is, I do not mean to marry.'

After he had stared at Antonio a full minute, the lavrador's stern face suddenly relaxed and he burst into unaffected laughter.

'If that's all, friend Francisco,' he chuckled, clapping Antonio on the back, 'it's less than nothing. Why, I myself didn't mean to marry: and look at me to-day! De Barros Lopes, the farrier, swore he'd never marry; and he has eight children. Old Martins said he would hang himself before he would marry; and this is his third wife.'

'Then old Martins has taken my share,' said Antonio curtly. 'I repeat I shall not marry.'

'The reason?'

'My . . . my work.'

'Work? Is your Worship the only man in Portugal who works? There's a bit of work, now and again, on my own farm. Is it the worse done because there's a mistress, and three stout sons and the best daughter a man ever had? Work! My wife and I squabble sometimes; but the best day's work I ever did was to get married.'

The monk held his peace. Senhor Jorge, genuinely desirous of promoting Antonio's happiness as well as Margarida's, chaffed him with rough heartiness.

'Come, come,' said he. 'Your head's full of cobwebs. You've been hiding yourself too long in holes and corners. Don't be a fool. It's all very well while you're young and healthy; but, when days and nights of sickness come, who will nurse you then, and put up with your foibles? And who will carry on the wine-making when you're dead and gone? Come, you don't want to let the grand old family of Da Rocha die out? Besides . . . a man without a woman is only half a man.'

Senhor Jorge uttered his concluding sentence with a meaning change of tone. But, even if his own daughter

Margarida had not been involved, the lavrador had too much delicacy to expand this clinching argument. Antonio, however, scented the meaning.

What was he to say? All these arguments against celibacy, and a host of others more refined, had hurled themselves in his teeth a dozen years before, when he first contemplated the vow of chastity. But the answers which satisfied him were not available in the presence of Senhor Jorge. He could not reply that he had deliberately renounced his high-sounding names until events forced him to resume them; that he welcomed roughness and solitary vigils of pain in thankful honour of the Man of Sorrows; and that the succession of Saint Benedict's spiritual family was secure until the end of the world. With bent head and knitted brows he remained mute.

'Then I will persuade you no more,' said Senhor Jorge. 'If my wife knew I had said half so much, she would never forgive me. By Saint Braz! To think I should be begging and praying anybody to be so kind as to marry Marge! Before I asked for Perpetua, I had to go down almost on my bended knees. Pash! Sometimes, before she braided up her hair, I've watched Margaridinha playing about the house, and I've thought how I would hum and haw and hesitate when a suitor should come along. I thank your Worship. For to-night I've done with him. If he wants to speak to me after Mass next Sunday he may; but next Sunday will be his last chance.'

Antonio flung himself against the door before his ruffled host could open it.

'One moment,' he pleaded in low, insistent tones. 'Here and now let me say, once for all, that neither

next Sunday nor any other day can I do myself this great honour. Senhor Jorge, I shall never forget the extreme compliment you have paid me. Senhor, I trust you to keep my secret. I cannot ask for Margarida because . . . already . . . I am . . .'

'You are married already,' hissed the lavrador, blazing into terrible indignation.

'No. No, no, a thousand times. But . . . I am plighted to another Bride.'

He turned away abruptly and walked to the tiny window. The scudding moon had escaped from the black rain-clouds, and Antonio thought he could discern the white belfry of the abbey chapel rising above the distant pine-woods.

'Another bride?' echoed Senhor Jorge, more wrathful than ever. 'Who? Where? When? It's that chalk-faced chit of a Rosalina Saldanha!'

'No,' Antonio answered, wheeling round. 'Neither Rosalina Saldanha nor any other mortal woman you've ever seen or heard of.'

'Then where is she? Why does she leave you year after year alone? Tut! A fine bride. Let her take you or leave you. You're a fool to stand it.'

'We will not quarrel,' said the monk. 'If you knew all, you would not malign Her. It may be years, many years more, that I must live alone. But my faith is plighted, and there's an end.'

This time it was the older man who walked to the window. After a long time he asked, without looking round:

'Why did not your Worship think of this before? Why did he come here to-night, leading on my poor Marge, and setting all the tongues a-wagging?'

There was an obvious and fair retort; but Antonio did not make it. Instead, he answered:

'For that blunder I ask pardon. I had promised to come to the serão: and I had some foolish idea that it would give me a chance of putting matters right. In England I prided myself on having tact in these things. But pride goes before a fall. Forgive me for not staying away. I have blundered worse than a village booby. Yet I hope, in spite of all, that we may part friends.'

They parted friends.

Out in the open, Antonio said to José:

'Hear me for one minute on a matter we need never mention again. I have made it plain to Senhor Jorge that I am not free to marry the Senhorita Margarida.'

'But Senhor Jorge was not satisfied with that?'

'I told him,' replied Antonio awkwardly, 'that I am already plighted to another Bride. You know what Bride I mean, José?'

Yes. But Senhor Jorge doesn't.'

Half a mile farther on Antonio demanded:

'About this ghost—this black monk in the chapel. I was thunderstruck. I thought you were mad.'

'For once in my life,' said the peasant, 'I had all my wits about me. I overheard that cockatoo of an Emilio saying that he often took a stroll in the abbey gardens, after his day's work. He was lying; but I didn't want the other young fellows to begin prowling about up there.'

'They'll prowl all the more now.'

'They never will, your Worship,' affirmed José flatly. 'They're the poorest lot I ever saw. There isn't a man

among them. Why, at Pedrinha das Arcias, if we had heard of a ghost, a dozen of us would have turned out to see how ghosts looked after they have been soused with buckets of cold water. Here they're fops and cowards. No, your Worship. From to-night the abbey is safe.'

Antonio marvelled at José's shrewdness. It was of a piece with his shrewdness in choosing the sun-baked sand-pit for burying the boxes of the Viscount. All the same he felt it his duty, as José's spiritual director, to rebuke him mildly, saying:

'But there's no ghost there at all.'

Hardly were the words out of his mouth before he regretted them. Fresh from his well-meaning prevarication with Senhor Jorge, who was he to censure others? He hoped José would not notice the inconsistency; but he hoped in vain.

'I never said there was any ghost,' chuckled José. 'I said there was a monk, all in black, in his stall. You know what monk I mean, your Worship.'

'But Emilio Carneiro doesn't,' said Antonio.

They laughed loudly together and strode on, talking with unwonted gaiety under the bright moon. Had not the master rid himself of match-makers, and had not the man made the abbey safer than ever?

'Sing,' begged the monk.

The peasant struck up a rousing song in praise of wine. But in the middle of the third verse he stopped. They were crossing the road which led from Navares to the main gate of the abbey. José sank on one knee and pored over something he had seen.

Two wheels had cut two deep grooves in the wet sand. José measured the distance between them with

his two palms. Then he examined the marks of the horse's shoes.

'These wheels,' he said, 'were not Portuguese. And, unless they've shod him in Lisbon or Oporto, these shoes didn't belong to a Portuguese horse.'

Antonio hardly heard him. High on the hill, from inside the principal window of the abbey guest-house, the flame of a candle looked out like a living thing.

BOOK IV

THE AZULEJOS

I

UNTIL one o'clock in the morning Antonio and José sat in council. But their session was barren.

Who was up at the guest-house? Could it be the Viscount de Ponte Quebrada, resuming his search for the buried pictures and chalices? They thought not. The Viscount had become a considerable personage, and could not afford to run such risks. Or was it the Viscount's old accomplice, the Captain? Perhaps. The Captain had little to lose. But no: it could not be he. A thief would never have proclaimed his presence by setting lights in front windows.

For a minute or two Antonio indulged a hope that the visitor was merely his old adversary, the official of the Fazenda at Villa Branca. But José shook his head, and said that such a guess was too good to be true. He went on to avow a presentiment that the abbey had been sold. Antonio could not contradict him, and the two men sat silent for a long time.

'Come and speak to me at dawn,' said the monk, going at last to the hearthside and lighting José's lantern. 'Perhaps it will be best for one of us to march up boldly to the guest-house. As the nearest neighbours we can easily make some excuse.'

José shook his head again and departed without a word.

Soon after daybreak they met in the garden, and the master confessed that his man was right. God only

knew what high strategy and petty tactics they might have to employ in their defence of His house; and it would be the worst policy to thrust themselves unto notice.

The autumn sun was rising behind the abbey hill. Pearly mists hid everything. But, as the glorious orb ascended, the tides of vapour began to ebb. Here and there the tops of the higher pines showed themselves above the drifting mists, like masts and shrouds of ships wrecked in milky shallows. A minute later the chapel and the monastery buildings appeared, huge and vague as an enchanter's palace suddenly exhaled from twilight seas of foam.

As the outlines sharpened, Antonio recalled his vigil on the moonlit night of his return. He remembered the fear which preceded it—the sickening fear that he might be too late. But he remembered also how he had finally trusted in God to guard His own.

'Come, José,' he said. 'You have done your share and I have tried to do mine. Our Lord will do His. It is time for prayers.'

He led the way to the narrow room which served them as oratory, and drew back a curtain from a picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. José's education had advanced so far that he was able to recite Terce in Latin. They sat down facing one another, on benches which José had carved like stalls, and began the Hour. At the psalm *Levavi oculos*, peace and strength entered their souls.

'I have lifted up my eyes unto the hills, from whence my help shall come,' said Antonio.

'My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth,' responded José slowly and attentively.

Their faith waxed stronger as the psalm proceeded. 'Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep,' said José; and Antonio answered: 'The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand.' José said: 'The sun shall not burn thee by day, nor the moon by night.' Antonio said: 'The Lord keepeth thee from all evil.' José said: 'May the Lord keep thy coming in and thy going out, from this time forth and for ever.' And by way of Amen, Antonio put his whole soul into the appointed *Gloria Patri*, and into the first words of the following psalm *Lætatus sum*, 'I was glad.'

They parted at the oratory door, and consumed separately their first breakfast, which consisted of rye bread and of a so-called coffee made from roasted grain and the roots of dandelion. Before six José was at work removing gorgeously discoloured leaves from a pergola, while Antonio planted some vines which had come to him from Sexard in Hungary. As they moved about they could plainly see the buildings and out-buildings of the abbey; for the mists had drifted away. But no smoke rose from the guest-house chimney, and the place gave no sign of life.

At half-past ten, when José was in the kitchen preparing *almoço*, or second breakfast, Antonio heard a dull muttering of hoofs on the sandy road. He dropped his tools and began running like a hare up the ravine, so as to get a view of the horseman from behind a boulder. Ducking his head and shoulders he kept himself out of sight.

The noise of the horse's feet stopped. Antonio was startled. He raised his head and saw a mounted man stooping from the saddle, and fumbling with the latch

of the farm gate. While he remained in this position it was impossible to make out his age, or class, or nationality. The monk, however, did not wait. He turned and raced back to warn José. But, before he could reach the kitchen door, the horseman came cantering down the slope.

He sat his bay horse rather stiffly and in an un-Portuguese style. His clothes looked English. As he drew near, Antonio saw that he was young and blonde. The monk had a feeling that he and this stranger had met before.

It was young Crowberry.

When he recognised Antonio a flash of joy lit up the youth's pale blue eyes. But, instead of greeting his old cicerone simply and straightforwardly, he jumped down from his horse and began to declaim some prepared rigmarole.

'Zounds! By'r Lady!' he cried, 'whom have we here? Marry, by my halidom, I trow it is the goodly knight Oliveira da Rocha himself.'

'Why not speak English?' asked Antonio, wringing the young man's hand.

'English?' he retorted. 'If you're disrespectful, Senhor da Rocha, I'll begin speaking Portuguese.'

'*Pode*,' said the monk. Which meant 'he may.'

Young Crowberry fumbled in his pockets and fished up a manuscript phrase-book which had been compiled for him, he pretended, by some pitiful friend in Oporto. After turning the pages this way and that, he asked:

'*Está prompto o almoço?*' Young Crowberry meant, 'Is breakfast ready?'

'Not quite,' said Antonio.

'*O que tem Vossa Mercê:* What has your Worship got?'

'Brown bread, green figs, white cheese, purple grapes, red wine, and black coffee.'

'*De-me alguma bebida:* Give me something to drink.'

'I don't understand,' said Antonio, shaking his head.

José, hearing voices, thrust his shaggy face through the window and glared at young Crowberry, with his mouth almost as wide open as his eyes.

'This,' said Antonio, 'is José Ribeiro, the *régisseur* of the Château da Rocha. He knows more about sea-sand wine than any other man north of Collares.' And, turning to José, he explained in Portuguese: 'You have heard me speak of the English Senhor Crowberry. This is his son. Go and kill a chicken—the fat brown one.'

When José had departed on his murderous errand, Antonio brought their guest a large glass of green wine. Young Crowberry drank it with a wry face; but he admitted that it acted like a charm in quenching his thirst. They walked out into the vineyards.

'And now, Senhor Eduardo, explain yourself,' demanded the monk.

'I came on ahead—last night,' said Senhor Eduardo.

'Ahead of whom?'

'Of the others.'

By this time Antonio was getting irritated by young Crowberry's tiresome smartness; and he was on the point of asking him, rather sharply, not to be a young ass. But he restrained himself and waited. At last young Crowberry said:

'They are in Coimbra. Dirty hole. They're follow-

ing next week. I came on ahead to chase out the rats and beetles.'

'We saw a light last night in the guest-house window,' said Antonio. 'Do you mean to tell me you opened the place in the dark, and slept there by yourself?'

'Certainly. What of it?'

'Simply this. My dear Eduardo, you are not half such a muff as you try to look, and not one tenth such a ne'er-do-well. But about these "others." Who are they? Why are they coming here? How long will they stay?'

'Firstly,' replied Edward Crowberry, 'there's the guv'nor. Secondly and thirdly, there's Sir Percy and his daughter. Fourthly, there's Mrs. Baxter. Fifthly and sixthly and all-the-restly, there's the servants.'

'Who are Sir Percy and his daughter? And who is Mrs. Baxter?'

'Sir Percy is Sir Percival Lannion Kaye-Templeman. His daughter is named Isabel. Lady Kaye-Templeman died before I was born. That's why there's a Mrs. Baxter. She's called Isabel's governess; but it's Isabel who does the governing.'

'Why are they coming here?'

'The devil only knows. I'm sure they don't.'

Antonio stopped dead.

'Master Edward,' he said, 'if you're wanting to be a wit or a rattle you shall practise on me at breakfast. But not now; not here. Why are these English people coming here with your father?'

'What's the use of asking me?' demanded young Crowberry, somewhat injured. 'It's a complicated business, and I haven't brains enough to puzzle it out.'

'Then use such brains as you've got. Have they bought the abbey, or taken it on lease, or what?'

'Something of that sort,' pouted the young man. 'The guv'nor will explain. I tell you I don't understand it.'

A jangling bell announced that breakfast was ready. Young Crowberry threw up his hat and shouted for joy.

José's fat brown chicken did not remind the guest of a Surrey capon. But as his teeth were good and his appetite still better, he devoured two-thirds of it with relish, and had still enough hunger left for the fruit and bread and cheese. During the meal he consumed a whole bottle of wine and, to finish off, he drank a large cup of corn-and-dandelion coffee, as well as two little glasses of Antonio's orange brandy. Then he lit one of his own cigars. Antonio excused himself from smoking.

Soothed and warmed by these good things, young Crowberry gradually became a reasonable human being. He began to talk naturally, and the monk was rejoiced to see that he was vastly improved. It turned out that he had gone back home after only eight months in Oporto, and that he had thrown up the wine-trade in favour of civil engineering. He told Antonio about the railway mania in England, and nearly all his talk was of cuttings, viaducts, and tunnels. Only with difficulty was he led back to the abbey.

'All I know is this,' he said at last. 'You wrote to the pater about raising a thousand or two and buying the place yourself, didn't you? Well, the old man'd have done it like a shot, only he was putting his last shilling into the Sheffield and Birmingham Railway. I expect he'll lose it all in the long run. But he wanted to find you the money. So he's made some kind of a

bargain with Sir Percy. They've been jabbering and scribbling over it for a year. Sir Percy's supposed to have bought the abbey from the Portuguese Government. Don't ask me how he's managed it. I always thought he was so hard up he couldn't buy a penny bun.'

The monk's heart beat fast.

'But if this Sir Percy has bought it,' he asked, trying to conceal his intense anxiety, 'what good is it to me?'

'Any amount,' said young Crowberry. 'You don't want a lot of tumbling-down cells and chapels and cloisters; you only want vineyards. As for Sir Percy, he does not want to be bothered with vineyards; he only wants a nice place. So you're to be offered a perpetual lease of the vines. No, not perpetual. Only nine hundred and ninety-nine years. So don't waste any time.'

The room, with its odours of food and wine and tobacco, suddenly seemed to stifle Antonio. He felt faint and sick. Under the coarse tablecloth his two hands were so tightly clenched that the nails cut his flesh.

At first he blamed his own stark folly in writing to Mr. Crowberry. But he quickly remembered how long had been his deliberation and how many his prayers before writing the letter. Indeed, he had not posted it until, as he believed, the voice of the Holy Ghost said 'Yea.' For a few moments Satan entered into the monk's heart. So this was God's way of keeping faith with His champions! Seven years, seven hungry, lonely, loveless years of unceasing toil . . . and for what? For this: that the holy house of God and the venerated home of Antonio and his brethren should become 'a nice place' for a spendthrift heretic.

Into the ears of the monk's soul the arch-tempter breathed his poison. 'If you had known last night, under the moon, what you know this morning,' he whispered, 'you would not have let Margaridinha's bowl smash into atoms. Poor Margaridinha! First you broke the bowl, and now you are breaking her heart. She has sobbed all night, for your sake. But it is not too late. Go back to Senhor Jorge. Say to him——"

Antonio sprang up and strode to the open door.

'The devil,' said young Crowberry.

'Yes. The devil!' cried Antonio, turning upon him with a terrible look.

But the promise of Terce was suddenly fulfilled: *Dominus custodit te ab omni malo.* Without the smallest anti-devilish volition on Antonio's part, without one *Retro me, Satana*, without one syllable of prayer, without one crossing of his breast, the tempter vanished back like a spent flash of lightning into the dark. Nor did he flee leaving behind him a void. It seemed that in his unholy footprints stood a strong angel of consolation. Antonio's faith returned with three-fold force. Once more he knew that God would do His part, and that these new happenings were parts of His design. Perhaps He was about to draw Antonio and José along mysterious ways. Perhaps it was His will that they must press with torn raiment and bleeding feet through many a thorn-brake and over leagues of sharp-edged, burning stones. But it was to victory and triumph, not to defeat and shame that the path ran.

When the monk, with inarticulate apologies, resumed his place at the table, the terrible look in his eyes had given place to radiant happiness.

'That's right,' said young Crowberry. 'I was getting

frightened. I was beginning to remember a story I read years and years and years ago, when I was only a young fellow, like yourself. It was something about a man falling down dead, because somebody had broken good news to him too suddenly.'

II

Before young Crowberry set out on his return to Coimbra, he deigned to say a little more about his movements and his party. It appeared that he could speak Portuguese fairly well, and that he had travelled all the way from Oporto to the abbey in an English-built dogcart drawn by an English-bred horse. After depositing his heavier luggage in a bedroom at the guest-house and spending one night there, he had left the dogcart in the stables, and was returning on horseback, with nothing but saddle-bags, a heavy-handled whip, and a pistol.

The monk asked twice for some account of Sir Percy Kaye-Templeman. His first application drew forth the answer that there were many better fellows; his second that there were many worse. Concerning Sir Percy's daughter, young Crowberry was voluble: but very little information could be extracted from his discourse, which was almost entirely to the effect that young Crowberry would give his hat (or, at successive repetitions, his ears, or his horse, or tuppence, or the whole world, or his boots, or his soul, or his dinner, or a million pounds) to know what Senhor da Rocha thought of her.

It was of Mrs. Baxter that the young man spoke with most clearness. He persisted in never naming her without the prefix 'That Excellent Creature.'

'That Excellent Creature, Mrs. Baxter,' he said, 'gave me solemn instructions to see that large fires were kept

blazing in all the bedrooms for a whole day. Now, except in the kitchen, there isn't a single fireplace or chimney. So I smoked all over the place instead.'

Antonio did not suffer his visitor to depart without a message to Mr. Crowberry, senior. He sent word that he sought the honour of providing a simple dinner for Mr. Crowberry and his friends on the day of their arrival. With regret he added a request that each one of the party would bring his own napkin, knife, fork, and spoon. He concluded by offering his friendly and neighbourly services in general.

José agreed to walk a couple of leagues at the bay horse's side, so as to shew young Crowberry a bridle-path which would save him three hours in the saddle. They left at one o'clock.

As soon as horse and men were out of sight, Antonio hurried up the hill and made his way into the abbey. It was his hope and prayer that Sir Percival would be restrained by lack of cash from interfering with the monastery and that he would live quietly and cheaply in the more modern and airy little guest-house. But the monk knew that the sacred pile was menaced by a thousand perils; and therefore he spent nearly an hour in wandering from kitchen to refectory, from library to calefactory, from cell to cell, from cloister to chapel. Perhaps he was near the last time. With burning earnestness he recited Vespers in his old stall.

Rising from his knees, Antonio paid a visit to a useless-looking door in the outer wall of the cloisters. Like all the other doors of the building, it was so well plastered over with official seals on the outer side that José and Antonio had never dared to use it. Yet Antonio knew its secret well. A massy bolt appeared

to secure it, like the gate of a castle; but there was a tiny green-painted stud of iron hidden in the masonry outside which controlled the whole. By pressing the stud, the staple on the door-jamb moved slightly, leaving the bolt free. This clever and simple mechanism was due to an English Benedictine, who had fled to Portugal just after the martyrdom of the Abbot of Reading, under Henry the Eighth. Antonio examined it, and found it in good order.

He and José reached home almost at the same moment. The man would have returned to his work without a word had not the master stopped him.

'These English people, who are arriving next week,' said Antonio, 'may become, in the long run, our worst enemies. But they think they are our friends. They mean well. We will do our whole duty to them as neighbours.'

José said nothing.

'It is my prayer,' added Antonio, 'that they will look up the monastery and be satisfied with the guest-house. For some things, I wish . . . I hope . . . I should like them to hear . . . I mean, José, I should like some one in the village to tell young Mr. Crowberry your ghost-tale about the monk.'

'He knows it already, your Worship,' said José stolidly.

'Knows it already? Who told him?'

'I did, your Worship.'

Antonio could have wrung José's hand. But the shaggy fellow had a little more to tell.

'They come on Tuesday,' he said slowly. 'The young Senhor Crôbri says he is going to sit up in the chapel on Wednesday night. But he won't see anything; be-

cause I know that next Wednesday the monk won't be there. The young Senhor is going back to England, starting on Thursday. After that, the monk can do as he likes. The senhoras will be so frightened at the young Senhor's tale that they won't go near the abbey. As it's nearly winter, perhaps they'll soon be afraid of the guest-house too. Ghosts might begin appearing up there, as well, before long. You never know.'

'Come,' said Antonio, after he had done marvelling. 'We are both tired. We had a late night and an early morning, and we've walked a long way. The young Senhor ate both wings of the brown chicken and all the breast. But there are the two legs left. And, for once, we will open a bottle of our good wine.'

On the Sunday afternoon, at an earlier hour than usual, José and Antonio went up to the abbey. They oiled the secret levers which controlled the bolt in the cloisters, and replaced on the shelves of the library a few pious books which they had borrowed. Afterwards, sitting in opposite stalls of the choir, they sang Vespers and Compline. It was safe to sing, for once; because the feast of Saint Iria had drawn the whole able-bodied population of the parish to the village of Santa Iria do Rio, nearly three leagues away. In hushed voices they sang all the psalms to the proper tones; also the two hymns and the Magnificat. The sun shone warmly through the western window while they were singing: but the chapel was growing dim when they arose at the end of their silent prayers.

On the Monday little was done outside elaborate preparations for the morrow's dinner. Nearly all José's heirlooms rose again from their carven sarcophagi.

His six solid silver spoons, his solid silver ladle, and his china bowl with dark green leaves on a light green ground cried aloud for a worthy soup; and accordingly much time had to be spent in preparing a cream of cauliflowers. Meanwhile, a fowl, two partridges, and the prime parts of a kidling were gently cooking in a giant casserole, along with four or five handfuls of vegetables and herbs.

On the Tuesday, between eleven and twelve, when Antonio was upstairs shaking out his fine suit of English clothes, an ill-blown coach-horn blared out a wanton greeting. The monk leapt to his tiny window. An imposing procession was jolting along the narrow road. Antonio's keen eyes could make out almost everything, although the road was over a furlong away.

At the head of the file rode young Crowberry on his bay. With one hand he was holding a short horn to his mouth, while with the other he bunched up the reins and strove to caracole his deeply scandalized steed. Next rolled an open chariot, containing two quietly dressed ladies and Mr Crowberry, *père*. This was followed by a hired carriage, of Portugese build, wherein sat a tall, straight, military-looking Englishman and the official of the Fazenda, from Villa Branca. A smaller hired carriage held one of the Fazenda clerks and a Villa Branca notary. Two closed coaches, looking like superannuated diligences, brought up the rear. Antonio guessed that these crazy and stuffy vehicles were carrying the Englishman's servants and personal luggage.

The procession crawled up a slope, and disappeared in the dip of the hills. But five minutes later, while he was cutting an armful of flowers for the dinner-table, the monk saw it mount again on its way to the abbey.

About noon he distinctly heard, through the still air, the big gate screaming on its rusty hinges. It reminded him of the exceeding bitter cry with which that same gate had cried out when Saint Benedict's sons went forth from their ancient seat.

Antonio could picture the successive scenes. He could almost see Mrs. Baxter, young Crowberry's Excellent Creature, throwing up horrified hands at the comfortlessness of the guest-house, although Father Sebastian had been wont to grieve over its almost sinful luxury. He could imagine the Fazenda dignitary pompously breaking the seals, and calling upon all to witness the close of his impeccable stewardship. He could almost hear young Crowberry quipping and quirking about everything. But this last thought was too much for Antonio. It suddenly sharpened, almost to a poignant certainty, his fear lest irreverent feet should profane the holy place, and lest sacrilegious hands should be laid upon the Ark of the Lord.

Mr. Crowberry and the others were to arrive at half-past three and to dine at four, so that they could regain the guest-house before dusk. It was therefore with dismay, that Antonio heard horses and wheels on the road just as José's clock was striking three. He sprang up the stairs two at a time, and changed his clothes with both haste and speed. When, however, he descended to the ground-floor, it was not Mr. Crowberry's voice which met his ears.

The monk's visitors were the Villa Branca notary and the official of the Fazenda. They had left their carriage and the clerk waiting on the road. The notary said little: but the great man from the Fazenda was fulsomely wordy. Up at the abbey Mr. Crowberry had

more than confirmed in his hearing nearly all the local rumours concerning Antonio's cleverness and prosperity, and he deemed it prudent to pay so considerable a personage his respects.

There was coldness in the monk's tone as he prayed his old scorner to be seated; for he could not forget that, after his ten-league journey to Villa Branca, he himself had been kept standing. But, as policy required that he should stand well with the henchman of the Government, he concealed most of his disgust. To think of this pilfering bully sitting familiarly at his table went against Antonio's grain; but, when he found that both the notary and the official had heard of the impending dinner, he went so far as to suggest that they should remain. Happily, however, the shortness of the days made it necessary that the pair should at once resume their long journey. They drained two cups of wine, flourished a few parting compliments, and hurried away.

Hardly could the monk give a rapid glance at the table and a final order to José before young Crowberry was upon him, plunging from one room to another and back again, like a dog just off the leash. He poked his nose into everything, and kept on rattling out a thousand criticisms and witticisms.

'Mind you count these, later on,' he chattered, as he weighed two silver spoons in his two hands. 'If you find one missing, go through the pockets of that Excellent Creature, Mrs. Baxter. What's this? That beastly green wine? Pour it down the sink. And, look here, I say, mind you, da Rocha: don't forget to remember what I said about Isabel Kaye-Templeman. Where did you get this cloth? By the way, Sir Percy isn't

such a bad old sort, after all. Have you got any more of that orange brandy? I'll have mine in this.'

He rang his knuckles against José's great green bowl. Then his quick eye noticed that the best chair in the house was at the right of the table-head.

'H'llo!' he said, 'Isabel on your right? Of course. Couldn't be anywhere else. Now mind: you've got to tell me what you think of her—just what you really and truly and honestly think. Where are you putting the Excellent Creature?'

'At the foot,' said Antonio. 'Between your excellent self and your excellent father. On your left you'll have the excellent Isabel. On my left I shall have the excellent Sir Percival.'

'Then Heaven help you,' said young Crowberry. 'Still, you'll have Isabel on your right. And be sure to remember——'

III

Antonio hurried to the door. His guests, with the exception of Mrs. Baxter, who was following in the chariot with a hamper of silver and linen, had reached the little white gate of the garden. Mr. Crowberry rushed in first.

'Good, good, good,' he cried, wringing the monk's hand up and down. Antonio noticed with pleasure that his old employer now treated him as a social equal; but it pleased him more and touched him deeply to find that Mr Crowberry was overflowing with honest delight at his reunion with a friend.

Before he could reply he was being presented to Sir Percival. Sir Percival submitted to the ceremony inattentively. Nine-tenths of his wits were evidently engaged with something or somebody else. He was a tall, thin, straight, soldierly man, whose scanty grey hair and disproportionately luxuriant moustache made his head look too small and bird-like. His cheeks were a trifle red, his grey eyes bright and restless. As soon as one quick glance had assured him that Antonio did not mean to do him any harm, he seemed to lose interest in his host and in his surroundings.

With Sir Percival's daughter the case was different. Antonio instantly became conscious that, after four years of isolation, he was standing once more face to face with a being of his own kind. He felt, vaguely, that this being was tall, graceful, feminine, proud, fine;

but it did not occur to him to take stock of her features, or dress, or complexion. Until later in the afternoon, he could not have told young Crowberry the colour of her eyes, or whether she was dark or fair.

This had always been Antonio's way in the presence of a woman. When she happened to be handsome, he felt unerringly and immediately her grace and beauty; yet his first, involuntary, eager search was for her spirit, for the inner self which might perchance be peeping out from the depths of her eyes. His own eyes, dark and soft as brown velvet, could be in the same moment both masterful and tender. While he was still a boy, a wise old woman had said of him: 'May God put it into his head to turn monk, for he has eyes to break hearts.' Not that Antonio was ever aware of looking at a woman otherwise than at a man. The habit was unconscious; but, for all the purity and austerity of his heart and life, it was there. It was not a fault. One might as well have blamed him for his black hair or for his tallness.

Fifty times in the past Antonio's glance had flashed forth to probe fifty pairs of eyes. Black eyes, blue eyes, hazel eyes, grey eyes, brown eyes—he had glanced into them all. Very often this swift glance had encountered maiden shyness and confusion; very seldom it had struck against brazen immodesty, like a sword against a shield. Once it had met a devil, a devil from hell, all the uglier because of the possessed woman's sweet pink cheeks and gold-crowned white brow. Twice or thrice it had peered into bottomless lakes of pity; and twenty times it had surprised a craving for human kindness, a hunger and thirst for Antonio's or some other love. But, when Mr. Crowberry began reciting his formula of

introduction, the monk's keen glance met something it had never met before.

What his glance met was a glance more searching than his own; a still swifter glance which encountered his, like one mailed knight encountering another; a stronger, more impetuous glance which overmastered his and hurled it back. This glance came from beautiful eyes which were neither hard nor cold; but Antonio was too much taken aback to notice their heavenly blue. Unlike his, the lady's glance did not seem to be habitual. It seemed, on the contrary, to be something against the grain of her pride; something peculiar to an abnormal moment of her life. Of this the monk was speedily assured by the slight flush which warmed her cheeks as she turned the blue eyes away.

Mr. Crowberry put an end to the embarrassment. As tumultuously as a cart discharging a thousand of bricks, he expressed, in a single outburst, his joy at seeing Antonio, his detestation of Portugal, his ravenous hunger and raging thirst, and also some sudden animosity against his headlong heir. He wound up by demanding an immediate view of the champagne.

Antonio promised to give Mr. Crowberry satisfaction at a later stage. He explained that the dark and chilly cellar was no place for a lady at any time, and that even Mr. Crowberry could not go in and out of it with impunity during the heat of the afternoon. But the vineyards, he said, could be seen; also the *chais* or overground cellars, the patent wine-plant from Bordeaux, the Irish pot-still for the orange brandy, and some of the casks of Portuguese claret which England might expect to receive in twelve months' time.

At that minute young Crowberry joined them. He

was alternately sucking and rubbing one of his fingers which he had just burned while interfering with José in the kitchen. As the others moved off towards the nearer vines the young man detained Antonio and dug mysteriously into the monk's ribs with his unburnt hand.

'What d'ye think of Isabel Kaye-Templeman?' he muttered.

'How do I know? What do you think of yourself?' Antonio retorted. And he hurried after his guests, without waiting for an answer.

Sir Percival allowed his body to be marched round about Antonio's domain and in and out of the *chais*: but his mind and soul persisted in sticking fast somewhere else. While Antonio was explaining the Bordeaux wine-press, the baronet abruptly whipped out a pocket-book and began scribbling some figures which did not appear to have much connection with wine. Mr. Crowberry was equally trying. He asked Antonio at least forty questions, most of them extremely technical; but he did not listen to more than half a dozen of the monk's answers. As for Isabel, although she accompanied the others in a dutiful manner and listened to all Antonio said, she hardly spoke. Antonio divined what it was that vexed her. At the moment of the introduction she had counted on seeing before she was seen.

The dinner-bell jangled punctually at four o'clock. Mrs. Baxter had arrived, along with a Portuguese servant who was already on good terms with José in the kitchen. The Excellent Creature had brought three knives, three forks, two spoons, and a napkin for each person, as well as eighteen finely-cut wine-

glasses. She was a stoutish little person, looking like an old maid of the middle class, but with unmistakable aspirations to the dignity of what she called 'a decayed gentlewoman.' Young Crowberry presented Antonio to her in a set speech.

'Madam,' he said, making a low bow and sweeping the floor with the brim of his hat, 'I trust I have your leave to introduce the worthy Senhor Oliveira da Rocha, whose lowly roof you are honouring by your presence. His rugged frame conceals an honest heart; and, while he sets before us our frugal fare, I make bold to hope that the evident sincerity of his welcome will assist you to condon the inevitable defects of his hospitality. Senhor da Rocha, I have the good fortune to make you acquainted with a gracious lady, and one of the chief ornaments of her sex, than whom the world contains no more Excellent Creature, Mrs. Baxter.'

Antonio heard the first sentences of this harangue with horror. Such merciless teasing of a woman, a poor woman, a helpless widow, a dependent who could hardly retaliate, stung his ears. But he soon discovered that Mrs. Baxter had not yet found young Crowberry out. She heard him with approval, and received Antonio's greetings in a condescending manner.

When they entered the dining-room the soup was on the table. José's old spoons made so evident an impression on Mrs. Baxter that young Crowberry turned to her and said:

'Madam, it is hoped that we shall see our way to leave at least two of them behind.'

Whenever Mrs. Baxter could not understand young Crowberry's remarks she bestowed upon him a beaming smile. Antonio, whose blood had run cold, breathed

again as the smile appeared; but he felt some apology was needed for such perilous jesting at his table. In a low voice he said to Isabel, who was on his right:

'As that young man's old tutor, I fear he hardly does me credit.'

'As Mrs. Baxter's old pupil,' Isabel answered, 'I'm sure she doesn't mind.'

This time their eyes met more guardedly; but there was still much in the lady's glance which the monk could not fathom. It was as though their acquaintanceship already had a past, and was to have a future; as though they had often sat side by side before, eating and drinking or talking together; as though they were bearing themselves formally before fellow-guests who could not be allowed to suspect their good comradeship; as though they had a thousand confidences whereof to disburden themselves so soon as they should be alone. Not that Antonio made any such complete analysis as this while he was ladling out the soup from the green bowl. He was conscious of little more than a fine pleasure in the presence of this beautiful English girl who was entering so willingly and naturally into his rough life.

Everybody praised the cream of cauliflowers. In default of soup-plates, it was ladled into small round, gaily-painted dishes, about four inches deep. A dozen of them had cost Antonio the equivalent of an English shilling at the fair of Santa Iria a year before. All the dishes differed in pattern and colour. Young Crowberry was the first to eat his last spoonful of soup; and, having done so, he discovered at the bottom of his dish a violet leopard, with green spots, climbing a pink tree. He shoved it towards Mrs. Baxter.

'Alas, madam,' he said. 'The pity of it. How sad that the industrious artist whose work I am contemplating should have lacked those blessings of education which you, ma'am, are so signally qualified to impart! I protest that neither this cærulean quadruped nor the blushing vegetable to whose apex he aspires are to be found figured on any of the numerous pages which the late spendthrift Goldsmith devoted to the description of Animated Nature. I protest——'

So did Crowberry *père*, who had been listening to some eager talk of Sir Percy's. He gave Crowberry *fils* a kick under the narrow table, and once more lent Sir Percy his right ear.

'Mine,' said Isabel to Antonio, 'is a blue bird, with an orange-coloured tail. I should love to eat soup every night out of this nest of his.'

'It is your own,' said Antonio. 'I will send it up to-morrow.'

Not knowing the Portuguese etiquette which prescribed that Antonio should make the offer and that she should decline it, Isabel simply spoke what was in her heart.

'Mine?' she said gratefully. 'How good you are! But no. It's old and valuable. I could never think of it.'

'Very old,' smiled Antonio. 'The potter made it last year for the village fair. And very valuable. My man, José, bought twelve of them for a penny each. It is not worth naming.'

At the news that she could possess the blue and orange bird without leaving her host more than one penny the worse Isabel was as pleased as a child. Meanwhile, Sir Percy continued his conversation with Mr. Crowberry

and ignored his daughter. A Portuguese papa would have kept sharp ears and eyes upon his offspring; but the monk knew too much of English ways to be surprised.

José stamped in with the trout. When he had set them down and there was no further risk of his dropping both fishes and dishes on the stone floor, Antonio disclosed his name, his offices, and his virtues to the company, in English and in Portuguese. José blushed, saluted, and fled.

Within a ten-mile radius of the abbey less than a hundredweight of butter was churned in the whole year. Not an ounce was made by José. As for the olive oil, Antonio distrusted its fineness. Accordingly the trout had been simply steamed. They were served with a sauce made from the yolks of eggs, cream, and the juice of lemons. The host saw with pride that this dish was a success; but Sir Percy cleared his plate without seeming to know whether he was eating a mountain trout or a red herring. At last, when José was taking away the plates, he swung round towards Antonio like a weathercock on a rusty pivot, and said abruptly:

'Senhor Rocha, I hear you know all about alujezos.'

'Azulejos,' interrupted Mr. Crowberry, correcting him.

'Ajulezos,' snapped Sir Percy, without turning his head.

'It's a hard word to pronounce,' said Antonio; 'and a strange word altogether. As azulejos are little blue-and-white tiles, one would naturally think that it is derived from *azul*, our Portuguese word for "blue," and *ejo*, one of our diminutives—a bluelet, a blueling, a little thing of blue. But that's a pure coincidence. The word comes straight from the Arabic.'

Sir Percy stared. Antonio thought he was incredulous.

'I mean the word, not the thing,' he explained. 'The azulejos up at the abbey are not Moorish, of course. They are of the seventeenth century, produced under Dutch influence, but far finer, I think, than any Delft. All the same, we have genuine Moorish azulejos in Portugal; for example, in the Palace at Cintra.'

Sir Percy stared harder than ever.

'We'll talk about it later on. Not now. After dinner,' said Mr. Crowberry hastily. 'Sir Percy, you've not tasted your wine.'

The wine-merchant himself had already tasted three glasses. The wine was a white wine, somewhat resembling a very dry sherry, but as refreshing as young Moselle. The two Crowberrys praised its clearness, Isabel admired its colour, Mrs. Baxter said it was a little sour, and Sir Percy, having drained his glass at a single gulp, kindly said he would have some more.

The lifting of the great casserole's lid filled the room with fragrant vapours. With this dish José served a salad of bitter oranges and three bottles of the farm's best red wine. Mrs. Baxter said that this wine would be improved by the addition of a little hot water, nutmeg, and honey. Unhappily the Crowberrys, whose hearts were with ports and fruity Burgundies, also failed to note its subtler beauties. Nevertheless, the older Crowberry drank a whole bottle by himself, and then loudly insisted on trying the new champagne.

'We demand it, dead or alive,' said young Crowberry.

The champagne was brought at last. José walked in with it slowly, holding it neck downwards. Antonio

rose, took the bottle to the doorway and released the cork. With a cunning movement he reverted the bottle the instant the explosion had disgorged the sediment. When he poured out the liquid, the bubbles danced like diamonds upon amber. It was not very good wine; but the excitements attending it put everybody into a good temper, Sir Percy not excepted.

The remaining delicacies were set on the table all at once. For the ladies Antonio had taken care to provide two dishes of sweets. The first was filled with heart-shaped marmeladas, or quince jellies, firm enough to cut with a knife and not in the least sticky. The second was a custard of goat's milk and eggs, flavoured with spices and white wine. There were also six tiny snow-white cheeses, some fine broas, and a pyramid of grandly coloured fruits. The coffee, for once, was not grain-and-dandelion, but real Brazilian.

Knowing Mr. Crowberry's weakness, the monk signed to José that he should serve the brandy in small glasses, and that he should not leave the flasks on the table. When the cigar-box went round, Mr. Crowberry did not recognise it as one which Antonio had received in his presence four years before, a thousand miles away. His mind was busy with another thought. Filling up his largest glass with white wine, he rose to his feet, cleared his throat, and said pompously:

'To the Queens of England and Portugal. May their Majesties and their subjects be happy. God save the Queens.'

Everybody stood up and drank. José, knowing that some good work was a-doing, saluted. But when the others sat down again, Mr. Crowberry remained standing.

'I haven't done yet,' he said. 'There's another toast. Ladies and gentlemen, I take leave to propose the health of Senhor Francisco Manoel Oliveira da Rocha. May God forgive him for having such a name. Ladies and gentlemen, he's a jolly good fellow. Personally, I don't like his claret; but, to be candid, I don't like anybody's. I've tasted worse stuff from Bordeaux at half a guinea a bottle.'

Young Crowberry applauded noisily. Mrs. Baxter, who had dined well, blinked at the speaker like a sleepy pussy-cat. Sir Percival listened with almost excessive politeness. He had emerged from his abstraction, and was ashamed of his earlier brusqueness. Isabel's gaze was rivetted on her painted plate.

'When I reflect,' continued Mr. Crowberry 'that Senhor da Rocha has accomplished all this on a few guineas of capital and almost single-handed, I am more than ever proud to be his friend. The weeks I passed with him in England were the pleasantest of my life. Sir Percy . . . Ladies . . . I congratulate you on your neighbour. He has given us a dinner fit for kings. I say once more, he's a jolly good fellow, and I empty my glass to his lifelong health and happiness.'

Young Crowberry, using both hands, rattled the blades of two knives against the rims of two plates, at the same time stamping on the stone floor and yapping out, 'Hear, hear!' in a voice like a terrier's bark. The toast was drunk.

Antonio rose to respond. But it was nearly half a minute before he opened his mouth. Mr. Crowberry's unexpected compliment gave him an opportunity for which he was unprepared, and English was not his native tongue. At last he said:

'Mr. Crowberry, ladies and gentlemen. I cannot accept your compliments, for I do not deserve them; but I thank you most heartily for your kind wishes. I thank you, also, for the honour you have done me in coming to this little house. You, sir, have kindly spoken of our picnic as a dinner; but I am under no delusions, and I thank you, most of all, for your leniency towards our roughness and shortcomings.'

Mrs. Baxter graciously inclined her head, as if to bestow a plenary indulgence where it was urgently needed; but the others cried, 'No! Not at all!'

'And now,' Antonio went on, 'I have a toast on my own account, though I'm the only one to drink it. I propose the health of my guests. Mr. Crowberry's was the only face I knew when I landed in your beautiful England, and his was the last face I saw when I sailed away. Without his generosity I might not be on this farm today. It does me good to see him again. He is—I hope I'm pronouncing the word right—he's a jolligoodfellow.'

'And so say I,' sang out young Crowberry. 'He's a block of the young chip.'

'As for Sir Percival Kaye-Templeman and . . . and Her Ladyship,' added the monk, suddenly becoming hazy as to the status of a baronet's daughter, 'I am indeed happy to have such neighbours. We place our services, such as they are, entirely at their Excellencies' disposal; and at Madame Baxter's also. Mr. Crowberry, you are aware, sir, that I used to work in the abbey vineyards, over seven years ago. I knew all the monks. I knew the old Abbot. He was a saint. He died a day or two after they turned him out, at Navares, the little town you passed through this morning. So it is natural I should have a great deal of reverence for

the old place. And I am thankful, more thankful than words can express, that it has passed to owners who will not hold so sacred a spot in disrespect. Often and often I have feared for its fate.'

An awkward silence followed Antonio's speech. Mr. Crowberry fidgetted in his chair. Isabel coloured warmly, and Sir Percy straightened his back more stiffly than ever. Suddenly young Crowberry came to the rescue with a comical wail.

'What about Me?' he asked. 'I'm a guest, and you haven't praised Me? Why ain't I a jolligoodfellow, too?'

'You are already jolly and, some day, I hope you will be good,' said Antonio, smiling good-humouredly at his pupil. 'Ladies and gentlemen, with my whole heart, I drink to you all.'

Everybody turned to Sir Percy. He seemed desirous of responding, but something held him down. Young Crowberry sprang into the breach once more.

'Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking,' he said, rising, 'I will nevertheless, however, try to attempt to endeavour to thank you on behalf of us all. Now for my own toast. The Ladies—God bless 'em. Senhor, I believe you have on your right a Lady Abbess who will give you every satisfaction. If, however, Her Ladyship should fail in anything, you have only to report the matter to Madame Baxter. I drain my glass to the Ladies.'

The four men drank. Isabel darted a grateful glance at young Crowberry, as if to thank him for delivering her from a painful situation; but he did not see it. Mrs. Baxter sat up, gasped, blushed, and managed to say:

'I'm sure, Mr. Edward, we are very much obliged.'

'Last not least, here's to José, the cook,' cried young Crowberry, and, raising his voice, he called through the door in Portuguese: 'Hola, José, how the devil are we to drink your health when there isn't any more wine?'

After José had been toasted and had saluted in response, Antonio suggested that he had detained his visitors too long, and that they were doubtless wishing to see more of their new home before dark. Sir Percy seemed grateful. Pulling himself together, he acknowledged the monk's hospitality with almost excessive earnestness, and pressed him to come often to the abbey. They walked together to the road.

'And I am truly to have the blue-and-orange bird?' said Isabel. 'You're sure you won't miss him very much?'

'Not a bit,' said Antonio. 'I know he will have a good home.'

He stood watching the chariot as it rolled away. At the bend of the road she turned and waved her hand.

IV

THE wine-merchant and his son did not drive home with Sir Percy and the ladies. They preferred to walk.

'Now then,' demanded Crowberry *fils*, pouncing upon Antonio as he returned from the gate. 'Out with it. What do you think of Isabel?'

But Crowberry *père*, following hard on his heels, swiftly sent the youth about his business. He wanted ten minutes' talk, he said, with Antonio alone.

'Da Rocha,' he began, as they paced the shady length of the chief pergola; 'believe me, it was one of the greatest disappointments of my life when I could not lend you the two thousand pounds you wrote for. If I'd only had sense enough to stick to wine, you could have had the money twice over in a jiffey. But I'm up to the ears in these damned railways; and Heaven only knows what will be the end.'

'A big profit, I hope,' said the monk.

'More likely a big smash. But leave all that. It's too late to alter it. Now, about these abbey vineyards. It struck me that I might get somebody to buy the buildings and to lease you the vineyards on easy terms. The only man I could think of was Sir Percy. I knew he was finding England a bit uncomfortable. You see, he's gone through nearly all his money.'

'How? Gambling? Drinking? Or what?'

'Worse. Inventions. He worshipped his young wife. She died suddenly, and I think it turned him a bit mad.

Anyhow, he's gone through two fortunes. All spent on experiments and patents. He has invented dozens of things people don't want. Ten thousand pounds went over a balloon with wings and a rudder. He has perfected a substitute for indigo; but it costs twice as much as the genuine article. I believe his new way of boring cannons has been taken up by the Government; but an artillery colonel stole the idea and collared all the profits. I don't doubt Sir Percy has invented a thing or two this very day, at your table.'

'You say he has spent all his money,' objected Antonio. 'If so, how could he buy the abbey?'

'Wait,' said Mr. Crowberry. 'Men like Sir Percy can't get down to their last penny as easily as you or I. Sir Percy's is an old family—older than any of our dukes, save one. Families like those are all spread out, through intermarriage. There's always some aunt or cousin, when it comes to the worst, who will send you five hundred pounds and a nasty letter. In this case, Sir Percy got the five hundred near home. It was his daughter Isabel's. She has a separate estate that can't be pawned. This five hundred came out of income.'

'But the price of the abbey was three thousand pounds.'

'Don't interrupt. It was three thousand guineas. That is, three thousand pounds for the Lisbon Government and three hundred for the Fazenda official. Two thousand eight hundred remain to be paid.'

Antonio's heart brimmed with wrath and shame and bitterness.

'I couldn't have managed it but for an amazing stroke of luck,' Mr. Crowberry continued. 'Over these damned railways, I got mixed up with a sort of broker

who knew all about Portugal. I don't like him; but he's a mighty clever fellow. Perhaps you know him. He got a peerage from your Government for lending them money at forty per cent. He's the Viscount de Ponte Quebrada.'

Antonio succeeded in remaining silent.

'Strangely enough, he knew this very abbey. It was the week after I had your letter. I told him that a friend of mine wanted to buy the vineyards; and he recognised the name of the place at once. I tried to get him to lend you two thousand on it; but he wouldn't do it to a stranger. Then I asked him to lend it to Sir Percy; and he seemed quite struck with the idea.

'That very night he went and saw Sir Percy on his own account, and they made some sort of three-cornered bargain. The Viscount has squared the Fazenda, and he's given Sir Percy introductions for getting a railway concession—Lisbon to Oporto—worth millions! I suspect the Viscount will get the millions, and Sir Percy will be the figure-head. As for the two thousand eight hundred, they've to pay three hundred on New Year's Day, and the balance in five half-yearly instalments.'

'Who will pay? The Viscount? Or the daughter Isabel?'

'Keep quiet. It seems the Viscount told Sir Percy, on the quiet, that there are several jobs about this abbey which they can work together. He mentioned one. These al— I mean, azulejos. Sir Percy has invented a way of getting them down.'

Antonio's heart almost stood still.

'They can't, they daren't,' he cried at last. 'Till the abbey is wholly paid for, how dare they?'

'Who's to object? Hasn't the Fazenda man got

three hundred, all for himself? Isn't he going to do anything to earn the money? Da Rocha, I always said you were not a man of the world. They dare, they can, and they will rip down those damned old tiles. And when they've got them down here they're going to get them down in other places—other old convents. The Viscount can get six hundred pounds a set. They're wanted for museums and galleries.'

'He can get at least a thousand,' cried Antonio.

'So much the better for Sir Percy and the Viscount. That's how the twenty-eight hundred is to be paid. It'll be all right. Now, about your lease of the vineyards.'

'Mr. Crowberry,' said Antonio, halting and looking with a white face at his friend. 'Don't think me ungrateful. But this hurts me to the quick. What if the monks should return to buy back their own? Nay, less. What if one of them should merely revisit it? Those azulejos were their chief pride. What will they say when they know that this, in a sense, is my doing; that it wouldn't have happened if I had never written to you for money?'

'Who's going to tell 'em?' demanded the other, vexed. 'If you don't, nobody else will.'

'Whether they ever know it or not,' said Antonio, 'I tell you I'd rather you should pluck out one of my eyes than tear down those azulejos.'

'Then you deserve to have been born one-eyed,' retorted Mr. Crowberry, thoroughly aroused. 'I never heard such tomfoolery in my life. This is what I get for trying to do you a good turn. Gad! As if you didn't put enough of a wet blanket on us all when you proposed our healths! I'll tell you what it is. There's too much

damnable gush in this hole of a Portugal, and that's why you're all beggars.'

Antonio was about to reply hotly; but the wine-merchant stopped him.

'No,' he said, 'I take that back. We won't quarrel. But you've upset me badly. I go away on Thursday or Friday. We've only one clear day to fix this lease. Don't be a fool.'

'If the azulejos cannot be spared,' replied Antonio, terribly agitated, 'I cannot become Sir Percy's tenant.'

'But, my ridiculous friend, look here. Sir Percy doesn't want a tenant—neither you nor anybody else. He's leasing you the vineyards to oblige me. D'ye expect me to go and make conditions when he's doing you a favour?'

Antonio began pacing up and down, with bent head and hands clasped behind his back. He strode, six steps this way and six steps back, over and over again, with a feverish tread, like an animal in a cage. After a full minute he threw up his head, and said:

'Do me one more kindness. Give me till to-morrow. In the afternoon I will come to the guest-house, to bring a little bowl for Miss Kaye-Templeman. Till then, I beg that you will not say a word of this to anyone?'

Waving down Mr. Crowberry's wrath with an imperious hand, he plunged under the orange trees. The Englishman took a couple of steps after him; then he shrugged his shoulders and strolled back to the house.

'What do you really and truly think of Isabel?' asked young Crowberry, who had headed Antonio off among the trees. This time he meant to have his answer.

The monk looked at him sadly, and passed a hand over his burning eyes.

'The Senhorita and I talked very little,' he replied. 'So far as I know, I like her.'

'Is she pretty?'

'Yes.'

'And clever?'

'I think so.'

'She's as clever as a devil. That's the trouble. All head, no heart. And as proud as Lucifer.'

Young Crowberry said that Antonio could hardly endure his chatter.

'Something's wrong,' he said, with genuine concern in his boyish voice. 'What are you down in the doleful dumps for?'

At first Antonio shook his head. But the youth's frank distress touched him. The trouble was too great to be confined within one breast; so he detailed Sir Percy's plan. When he had finished he added:

'But why should I worry you with all this? You are young, you are buoyant. You have been brought up amidst different religious ideas. This is a matter you cannot understand.'

Young Crowberry gripped the monk's fore-arm with a quick, fierce grip. As he let it drop, he retorted intensely:

'Senhor da Rocha, as you say, I am young. But even I have learned one thing that you haven't. There is not always a merry heart under a cap and bells. My jabber is flippant, no doubt. But . . . but God knows how much I care for the things you say I can't understand.'

Antonio was startled clean out of his trouble.

'You don't mean to tell me, Edward,' he said, 'that

you have begun to care about religion—to care deeply with all your heart?'

The youth bowed his head.

'Tell me how much you mean,' Antonio demanded eagerly.

But Mr. Crowberry appeared in the doorway of the house and stepped out to join them. His son saw him, and said hurriedly in Antonio's ear:

'We leave on Thursday. I want a talk—a long one, a quiet one. Your man José told me a tale about a ghost in the chapel. I said I would watch there to-morrow night. I can get the key. Say that you will join me. But not a word to anybody.'

After a second's consideration, Antonio promised. And when a quarter of an hour later he said his farewells at the farm-gate he added softly, in young Crowberry's ear:

'Till to-morrow night . . . among the azulejos.'

V

'The gentlemen are all down at the other buildings,' said the English maid-servant who opened the guest-house door to Antonio. 'I think they said they would be in the chapel. Miss Kaye-Templeman is in, and Mrs. Baxter.'

The monk hesitated. After a single meeting, would it be correct to ask for Sir Percy's daughter instead of finding Sir Percy himself? He was not sure. Yet his dread and loathing of what the Englishman might be doing in the chapel held him back from following. Antonio knew his limitations. After all, he was still flesh and blood, and he could not be sure of mastering his wrath in the presence of a sacrilegious despoiler.

'You may tell Miss Kaye-Templeman that Mr. Oliveira da Rocha is here,' he said.

After he had repeated his name twice, the maid led him into the tiny ante-chamber. Antonio saw that the engraved portrait of Saint Benedict had been taken down. It was leaning in a corner, face to the wall; and, in its stead, hung a small oil-painting of two horses and a stable-boy, in the manner of Morland. The large crucifix had been removed from the place of honour; but its shape could still be seen, like the shadow of a dim cross on the white wall.

'Mr. Oliver Rosher,' mumbled the maid to somebody in the principal room.

As Antonio passed through the inner door he saw that Isabel was alone. She rose and came forward with such complete control of her blue eyes that the monk had a momentary fear of not being wanted. But there was warmth in her voice and a welcome in her smile. When she caught sight of the gaudy bowl in her visitor's hand she gave a little cry of unaffected joy.

'You've brought the blue bird,' she said. 'I felt quite sure you would forget all about him. How can I thank you properly?'

'By saying no more about such a trifle,' answered Antonio, placing the bowl in her hand.

Hardly listening, she turned her treasure this way and that, as if it had been a piece of Sèvres. For the first time Antonio was able to look at her critically. She was only a head shorter than himself; which meant that she was taller than six women out of seven. She stood up as straight as her father; but, while Sir Percy looked as though he had swallowed a steel ram-rod, Isabel Kaye-Templeman was as graceful and supple as a perfectly-grown young tree. She was slender, yet so exquisitely developed in proportion to her height that Antonio felt he was never likely to see a more perfect figure. Her abundant hair was brown-golden—perhaps more golden than brown—and as fine as threads of silk.

Finding the Portuguese October warmer than an English July, Isabel had put on a high-waisted, full-skirted dress of pink-sprigged muslin. Over the shoulders, which were cut rather low, she wore a gauzy scarf, unprimly fastened at the throat by an unjewelled brooch of old gold. As she fondled the penny bowl Antonio observed the fine whiteness and slenderness

of her wrists and fingers and the high-bred grace of every little movement.

'You will excuse Mrs. Baxter?' Isabel asked, suddenly coming back to formality. 'She lies down in the afternoon. My father and the others are at the abbey. Shall we go down and join them? They expect you. I think they want you to help them.'

'Let us join them,' said the monk.

While Isabel was upstairs putting on her gloves and hat Antonio paced up and down the familiar room. A carpet, some easy chairs, two small tables, and very many pictures and ornaments had already been unpacked. Most of these importations were pleasing in themselves; but they were incongruous with a Portuguese interior, especially when it was the interior of a semi-monastic building. Antonio, however, hardly gave all this bric-à-brac a glance. He was revolving in his mind, for the twentieth time, a bold plan.

With a promptitude which contradicted one of the monk's delusions about ladies, Isabel reappeared in a large straw hat and announced that she was ready. They started at once. But, instead of taking the direct road, the monk chose a roundabout path to the abbey.

'This is not the way,' said Isabel, halting after they had walked forty or fifty yards.

'It is not the shortest way, but it is the best,' Antonio answered. 'It takes only five minutes longer and it passes the most beautiful spot in the whole domain.'

She seemed a shade vexed, and did not speak again until they reached the spot of which Antonio had spoken. It was part of a ravine. Rustic steps led down to the margin of the water, which broadened in this place to a rippling pool. From a face of brown rock, to the

right, the bright torrent came tumbling in a thunderous cascade. To the left, at the lower end of the pool, it raced seawards almost hidden in a leafy, ferny, stony channel, whence its voice ascended like the throbbing, booming sound of an organ. Generation after generation of monkish gardeners had chosen this sheltered spot for the rearing of their most precious trees. Araucarias, deodars, date-palms, and cedars of Lebanon were mingled with cork-oaks, eucalyptus, willows, sea-pines, plum-trees, planes, and chestnuts. Ten or twelve tree-ferns overtopped by a giant palm suggested a tropical forest. Stepping-stones had been fixed in the pool at its narrowest part, and on the other bank was a grotto-chapel hewn in the face of a boulder as big as a house.

The stepping-stones were slippery with spray from the loud cascade; but Isabel tripped from one to another confidently and easily, scarcely touching Antonio's proffered hand. On the farther bank she paused, to take breath, and stood gazing westward. Below her lay a hundred acres of wood, softly musical with the twittering and singing of birds and with the hum of the hidden torrent. Farther down rose the monastery. Beyond, in the plain, could be seen Antonio's farm; and, still farther to the west, the Atlantic.

'This is the spot I meant,' said Antonio.

'It is very beautiful,' was all her answer. She spoke it in so cheerless a tone that Antonio was concerned.

'England is beautiful too,' he said. 'At first it is only natural you should be homesick.'

'Homesick?' she echoed, suddenly facing him with defiant eyes. 'I'm not homesick. I don't know what it means. I don't know what Home means, either.'

Antonio was startled. Three or four speeches came to his tongue's tip, some of them inquisitive, all of them sympathetic. Finally he said:

'Home is not built in a day. I myself was not bred and born in this part of Portugal. At first every face was strange. But it is home now. This torrent is the stream that runs through the kitchen of the abbey where I used to work. It is the brook that refreshes my little farm. Once it was no more to me than so many gallons of water. Now it talks and sings to me like a friend. Little by little you will learn to love this place.'

'I loved it as soon as I saw it,' she retorted. 'But I don't love it now. I loved it for about three hours.'

'Three hours? Why three hours?'

'We arrived here about noon. We left about three. I loved it till we came to your house for dinner. Then . . .'

Antonio waited anxiously.

'Then,' she continued, with a visible effort, 'I . . . I longed with all my soul to be back in England. You said . . . you remember what you said about our respecting this sacred place?'

'I remember,' said Antonio, his heart swelling with thankfulness. He had cudgelled his wits in vain for a way of introducing his plan; but here was the opportunity ready to his hand.

'Well,' she said, 'we haven't come from England to respect this sacred place in the least. We have come to ruin and defile it. Those blue-and-white tile-pictures in the chapel are the most wonderful things I've ever seen; but we have come to tear them down. We have come to use the big rooms and long corridors for all

sorts of experiments. We shall make them grimy with smoke and foul with fumes; and some fine day we shall have an accident and blow the whole place into the Atlantic, and ourselves with it.'

Her bitter and vehement fluency struck the monk dumb.

'That isn't all,' she added more bitterly than ever. 'When they've fished us up out of the Atlantic and dressed our wounds we shall start making plans for a railway. We shall lose all our own money and make all the honest people in the district lose theirs too. But what will it matter? We shall get something for our gold and silver. We shall be honoured with the company of the men who're going to make fortunes out of us and out of your country—men who don't know their own grandfathers. One of them will be kind enough to buy this domain from us for an old song and to build a fine square house out of the ruins. Senhor da Rocha, that is the way we are going to respect your sacred place.'

Antonio succeeded in meeting her defiant gaze with a show of calmness; but there was a tremor in his voice as he said:

'If I did not know that the Senhorita is witty I should say that the Senhorita is doing herself a little injustice.'

She knitted her brows while she framed an answer.

'Yes,' she said. 'The Senhor is right. The Senhorita is doing herself a little injustice. She ought to add, in her own defence, that she wouldn't have agreed so easily to come here had she known that anybody cared about the place. She thought nobody would be one atom the worse, save the bats and spiders. Yesterday she learned the truth. But she learned it too late.'

In his eagerness the monk strode close to her side.

'Too late?' he echoed. 'No, it is not too late. You have great influence with your father. There are fifty places in Portugal cheaper and more accessible and altogether more convenient than this for your experiments and your railways.'

'Don't call them mine,' she commanded. 'I hate and loathe them all. But, I repeat, it is too late. Neither I nor anyone else in this world has a grain of influence with my father. Opposition drives him mad.'

Her tone was even more decisive than her words. But Antonio could not face the fact that he was beaten. Had not Mr. Crowberry distinctly stated that Sir Percy had gained possession of the abbey solely by the help of Isabel's private fortune? She was not a schoolgirl. She was of full age; and if she was paying the piper surely she had something to do with calling the tune.

Yet how was he to remind her of her rights? Was not his intervention sure to be resented as the extreme of impertinence? Mr. Crowberry had not said that his revelations concerning the Kaye-Templeman finances were made in confidence; but probably this was an oversight of which it would be mean to take advantage.

The painful silence lengthened. Antonio ended it by starting on a new line.

'Those tiles,' he said, 'are not mere curiosities, to be carted about from one museum to another. I feel as if they are alive—as if your illustrious father will be flaying a living thing when he tears them from the wall. They were not ordered from a shop, and unpacked, and stuck all over the chapel like so much wall-paper from Paris. They represent the life and miracles and martyrdom of a saint of this Order—a saint of the

Portuguese Benedictine congregation who spent ten years in this monastery. He died in your England, for the Faith.'

She moved uneasily. Thinking he was gaining his point Antonio continued :

'Those tiles were not the work of one hireling artist. In a sense the whole community drew and painted them. Until they were turned out the monks cherished the archives of their abbey ; and these shewed how, under three successive Abbots, the cartoons gradually grew to perfection. Look. From here you can see the cemetery where the bones of those dead monks lie. Their souls will bless you from heaven if you will spare the chapel they made so glorious.'

'Senhor da Rocha,' said Isabel, dryly and rather coldly, 'we are at cross purposes. You will be shocked ; but I can't help it. I don't believe in monks and monasteries, nuns and nunneries. The monks' heaven is my hell. Their God is my Devil. Forgive me if I hurt you ; but it seems to me that there can be only two kinds of monks. Those who are not fanatics are hypocrites ; and those who are not hypocrites are fanatics. How can any really sane and honest man worship the Creator by despising His creation ? '

Antonio was about to reply, when she added hastily :

'No. Forgive me. I have spoken too plainly. Let me return to the point. I mean this : on behalf of any ordinary man or woman who loves this place for old sakes' sake I would work my hardest to spare it. But not for dead monks.'

'Then work your hardest for me,' pleaded Antonio eagerly. 'Don't you regard me as an ordinary man, who loves the place for old sakes' sake ? '

'No, I don't,' she said, recovering her ease. 'You are not an ordinary man. You will grieve over the azulejos for a few days; then, amidst your many interests, you will forget them. Or, better still, you will come to be glad that they have been taken away from a dark, shut-up hill-side sepulchre and placed where millions of people can see them and admire them.'

'You mean,' he said scornfully, 'that if I were a poor man; if I had a beautiful wife; if she and I had grown up together almost from the cradle; if her life were altogether bound up with mine—you mean that if someone should take her away by force and shew her every night from the stage of a theatre, to a thousand people . . . you mean, I ought to be grateful and glad!"

His own illustration startled him. It had leapt into his mind and out from his lips without his consent. It startled Isabel still more; for the tones in which it was uttered were sharper than knives. Once more she lost the mastery over her eyes.

'We must be going,' she said curtly, as soon as she could frame a sentence.

They descended through the wood without further speech until the monastery gleamed between the trees. Then Isabel halted and said:

'You ought to believe that I am a better judge than you of my father's character. I repeat that I shall do more harm than good by asking him to spare these tiles. To ask him such a thing will be a more difficult and unpleasant task than you imagine. But, if nothing else will satisfy you, I will try.'

'I thank you with all my soul,' answered the monk. 'But I will exact no promises. As you say, you are the best judge.'

'Let me speak one more word—for your comfort,' she added. 'This morning my father returned from the chapel dejected. He is no longer confident that he can strip the azulejos from the wall. Remember, not a single tile must be broken or the buyer will not have them. My father may fail.'

'God grant he may,' said Antonio fervently.

'You must indulge me,' she answered, 'if I find it a trifle hard to say Amen.'

VI

THEY found young Crowberry smoking a cigar outside the principal door of the monastery.

'Are the others inside?' Isabel asked.

Young Crowberry meditated a few moments. Then, with his hands clasped behind him, like a dame-school child repeating a lesson, he answered in an absurd monotone:

'I am Abbot of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute;
From the centre right down to the say
I am free to behave like a brute.'

'He is trying to make a parody on some lines by Cowper, one of our English poets who died thirty or forty years ago,' Isabel explained to the bewildered Antonio. 'I suppose he means the others have gone back home.'

'Our respective sires have verily got them gone,' said young Crowberry. And, dropping his affectation, he added, 'I don't know how you managed to miss 'em, coming down from the house.'

'Why have they gone away?'

'To mix a new mixture. Sir Percy has an idea.'

Isabel led the way into the monastery. She entered it with a proprietary air which made the monk suspect that Sir Percy had deceived her and that she believed

the place to be wholly paid for. Suspicion became certainty. He felt convinced that this was not a woman who would knowingly lend herself to Sir Percy's bargain with the Visconde.

'Shew me one of the monks' cells,' she commanded.

Antonio hesitated. The spectacle of a graceful girl tripping along the stern and dark corridors had already given him a slight shock. But the cells! Into whose cell could he take her? Decidedly he had no right to shew her any save his own.

To his own they went. The monk could never enter the narrow room without emotion, and he was forced to go to the window to hide his anguish. What if this should prove to be his last entrance? What if Sir Percy should indeed defile and destroy the whole abbey?

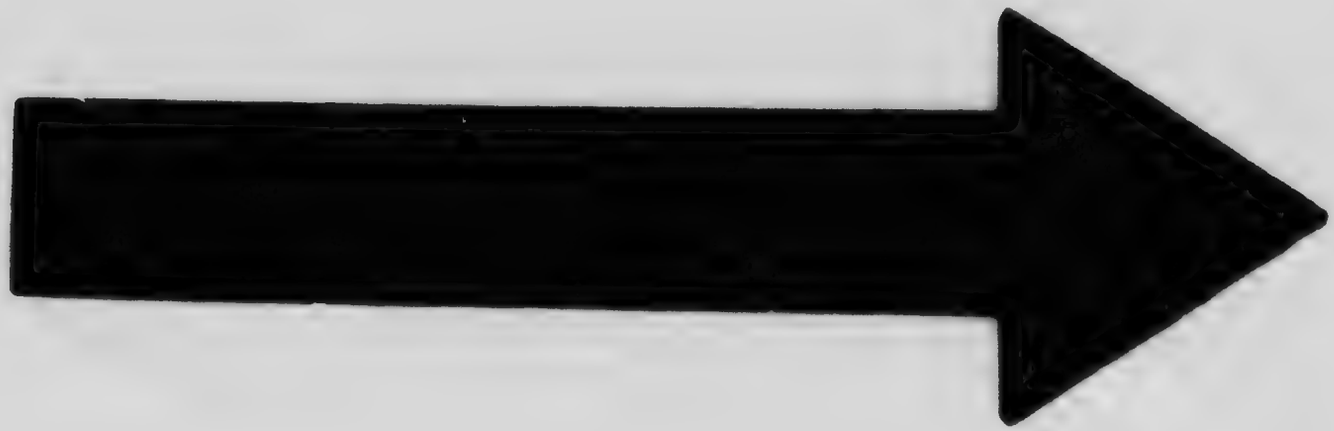
'It's actually clean,' said Isabel, amazed.

'What did you expect?' asked Antonio, turning round and speaking coldly.

'I've no idea. But I know I didn't expect cleanliness,' she said. 'Who is this bishop? They seem to have stuck his portrait up all over the place.'

'He is not a bishop,' put in young Crowberry. 'He is Saint Benedict, the great Abbot, father of all the monks of the West.'

Antonio started. The young man's tone was respectful, and it was evident that he was speaking sympathetically of matters about which he had been reading and thinking. Isabel, however, took little notice of the answer. As usual, she hardly recognised young Crowberry's continued existence. One after another she pulled out Antonio's empty drawers and opened his empty cupboards. Had she realised that the monks had been expelled only seven years before and that



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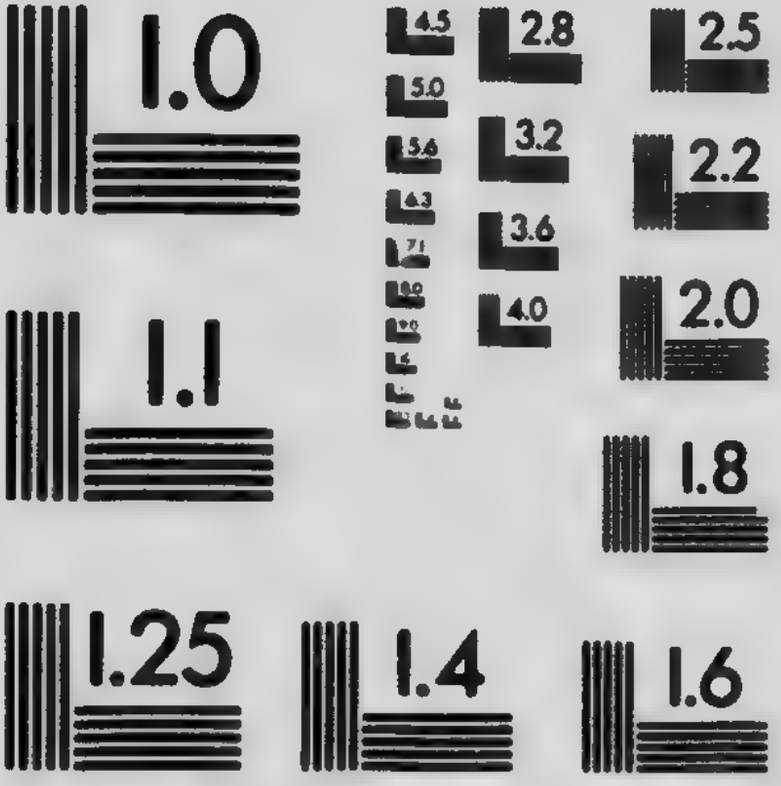

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many of them must be still living, nothing in the world would have induced her to pry into their sancta; but it was evident that she pictured the monks of Portugal pretty much as she pictured the monks of old England. To her they were forgotten men, vanished into dust ages ago; and there could be no more indelicacy in ransacking their old haunts than in examining the sculptures of a long-empty sarcophagus.

From the cell they went to the cloister. There Isabel quickly espied the spiral staircase; and, having ascended it, she sat down on Antonio's favourite seat of cork. The quiet beauty of the scene subdued her; and not a syllable was spoken until they had retraced their steps and reached the monks' entrance to the chapel.

Before setting foot in the monastery young Crowberry had thrown away his cigar; and on the chapel threshold, with unostentatious reverence, he uncovered his head. They went in, young Crowberry leading.

No irreparable injury had been done. Only in the north-west corner of the nave was there any trace of Sir Percy's operations. He had taken down part of a creamy marble cornice which ran along the top edge of the azulejos, level with the sills of the high-placed windows. A circular saw occupied the marble's old place. On the floor were two carboys of acid, a short ladder, and half a dozen chisels, large and small.

By tacit consent none of the three mentioned this display of apparatus. Indeed, they affected not to see it. Young Crowberry still took the initiative. Standing opposite the western wall, he besought Antonio to explain the azulejos.

The ten blue-and-white pictures were worked out in tiles which encrusted the walls to a height of about

fifteen feet. There was one on each side of the grand western door, and there were four on each of the north and south walls of the nave. Each picture measured about twelve feet across and was framed in decorative tile-work wherein green and yellow were added to the blue. Antonio began on the right-hand side of the western door.

'First,' he said, 'we have the Saint's birth. Like our divine Lord, he was born an outcast. His mother and father were on pilgrimage. Notice the Latin scroll, *Non erat eis locus in diversorio*: "There was no room for them in the inn." Through the trees you see the village of Carcavos as it was before the earthquake, with a Gothic church and two spires.'

The next picture was the one from which Sir Percy had removed the cornice; but Antonio did not change his tone.

'Second,' he continued. 'The Saint's boyhood. The book he is reading, in the shadow of the wayside shrine, is the "Little Hours of the Blessed Virgin." The scroll reads, *Zelus domus tuae comedit me*: "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." The games the other boys are playing are played in Portuguese villages to-day. The bullock-carts are unchanged also. Notice the two cats—lanky cats with long clever heads; they are Portuguese cats all over.'

The third picture was pierced by the doorway which gave access to the cloisters; and the designers of the azulejos had made bold use of what might have been a disfigurement. The picture shewed a small monastery. The gables, the dormer windows, the round arches, and the stumpy belfry of this little monastery were depicted in blue, on the tiles; but where there ought to have

been a blue-painted doorway one saw the solid jamb and lintel of the doorway through which young Crowberry and the others had entered the chapel. The figure of the Saint was nowhere to be seen; but all the men and women in the picture were crowding hurriedly towards the doorway as if they would see the last of somebody who had passed into the cloister. Above the solid lintel c[illegible] by blue boys were painted lying on their chests and trying to look down into the building.

'The Saint,' Antonio explained, 'has entered a religious house. And as that religious house was this very abbey, you see the point of the doorway. On the scroll, *Magister adest et vocat te:* "The Master is here and calleth thee."'

Antonio successively pointed out the pictures of the Saint's first Mass, with blue angels helping to uphold the Chalice, and of the Saint's first miracle, with Oporto in the distance. This ended the series on the north wall. At the marble balustrade of the gilded sanctuary, he explained the stalls, the retablo, and the boldly-ribbed Gothic vaulting, at least a century older than the nave. Then he worked back along the south wall, making short comments on the Saint's shipwreck and second miracle, his preaching to prisoners, his landing in England, and his visit to the Abbey of Westminster once Benedictine.

'Your Westminster Abbey looks strange,' said Antonio. 'It is before the alterations of Wren; but I admit the faults of the picture. The next one is better. It is the Saint's death at—I think you pronounce it Tyburn. The horses and most of the faces are quite English. The hurdle on which he has been drawn is broken. Notice the one-eyed man with the butcher's

knife. On the scroll are the Saint's last words, the same as Saint Stephen's, *Domine ne statuas illis hoc peccatum:* "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."'

This tenth and last of the tile-pictures was on the left of the western door; but not until Antonio ceased speaking did he notice a small leather-covered box resting on the ground at the foot of the green and yellow border of azulejos. It was gilt-lettered P. L. K.-T. The lid was off, shewing the stoppers of four chemists' bottles and some fine steel tools.

In the same instant, both Antonio and young Crowberry had the same thought. 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' The words were grimly appropriate to Sir Percy's act of sacrilege; yet young Crowberry felt sure that Antonio had only recognised their appropriateness when it was too late. As for the monk, although his eyes met Isabel's for no more than a moment, he saw that she was wounded.

'When was the Saint hanged?' asked young Crowberry, in order to end the awkward pause. 'In what reign?'

'In the reign of Isabel,' Antonio answered.

Young Crowberry opened his eyes wide. The monk, however, had already realised his second mishap.

'I mean Elizabeth, Queen Elizabeth, of course,' he burst out. 'The Portuguese for Elizabeth is Isabel. It's the same name.'

But Miss Kaye-Templeman was already moving towards the cloister doorway. Antonio, suddenly losing his English, turned desperately to young Crowberry.

'You've done it this time,' said the youth dolefully.

'Wait here,' commanded Antonio, in Portuguese. 'Don't follow.'

He sprang after the lady and overtook her in the cloister, although she quickened her footsteps at the noise of Antonio's. When she saw that explanations were inevitable, she got in the first word.

'Senhor da Rocha,' she said, haughtily, 'I am willing —perhaps over willing—to be talked to. But I decline to be talked at. This is your gratitude for my offer of help. As for "the reign of Isabel," I am too dull to see the joke; but I can see the insult.'

She walked on.

'Hear me one moment, I entreat,' cried Antonio. 'Have we not, both you and I, enough troubles, solid troubles? I have told you some of mine; and, although I do not know what they are, I can see that you have great sorrows too. For Heaven's sake let us not add to them by needless misunderstandings.'

He kept level with her as she walked; but she heard him with averted eyes.

'I swear,' he added, 'that I was not talking at you. I swear I didn't catch sight of your father's hateful tools till I had finished speaking. As for "the reign of Isabel," I am a Portuguese. In Portuguese King Charles is Carlos, King Edward is Duarte, King James is Thiago, Queen Elizabeth is Isabel. Those bottles and tools upset me; and I forgot to translate the name.'

When he saw that she neither vouchsafed him an answer nor paused in her walk his pride was roused.

'One minute more, and I will not trouble the Senhorita again,' he said, with as much hauteur as her own. 'I have offered an explanation and I have sworn that it is true. As for insults, I never give them, though I receive many. You are neither reasonable nor just. I have done.'

He was turning away. But her pride broke down. She stopped and faced him, and her blue eyes suddenly shone with a rush of tears.

'Yes,' she cried. 'Scold me, abuse me, make me wretched. It doesn't seem natural for anybody to be kind very long. Hate the sight of me, like everybody else. Call me unreasonable. So I am. Call me unjust. So I am. If there's anything more, I'm ready.'

Antonio stared at her in amazement as she clenched her fine hands and stamped one of her small feet. 'All head and no heart,' young Crowberry had said of this poor Isabel; and, for twenty-four hours, the monk had taken it for granted that young Crowberry was right. Yet, as she stood wet-eyed before him, she seemed to be all one big, bursting, breaking heart.

Her tears helped him like lenses to read her through and through. He discerned the tragedy of her girlhood, passed between a selfish woman and a father who was half a madman. He pictured her, dragged from place to place, from failure to failure, from humiliation to humiliation. He understood why she had builded icy barriers of pride to repel the insolent pity of those who found entertainment in her father's fiascos. And he saw, what she did not see herself, that under all her defences and pretences was the heart of a little child. He was filled with a yearning to comfort her; but he could only stand and gaze at her with infinite compassion.

'Yesterday,' she went on, 'I was happy. But to-day . . .'

He waited for her to say 'I am miserable.' But she had seen the pity in his brown velvet eyes and it stung her.

'To-day,' she said, 'I hate you!'

VII

As the main path from the monastery to the guest-house was broad and open, Miss Kaye-Templeman declined Antonio's protection. The glance and tone, however, which softened her words of refusal suggested to the monk that he was forgiven.

'You can't endure my escort,' he said, with a ghost of a smile, 'because you still hate me.'

'I don't hate you,' she retorted. 'I never did hate you—not you in particular. For the moment I simply hated every thing and every place and every body. It's over now. Pray believe I don't make such an exhibition of myself often. And please forget, if you can, that I was so weak and silly. Good-bye. I will tell my father you are still at the abbey.'

Antonio returned to the chapel. Young Crowberry was kneeling on the lowest step of the altar, facing the empty tabernacle. He rose in confusion and came to meet the monk.

'I thought you had taken her up to the guest-house,' he said, as they walked out into the cloisters. 'I heard you both go outside. I suppose you wasted your breath. Isabel Kaye-Templeman will never forgive you.'

'The Senhorita has forgiven me already,' said Antonio. 'Or, to be exact, my explanation is accepted.'

'Then you've some magic power over her,' declared young Crowberry. 'I thought so yesterday, at dinner.

Now, I am sure of it. With everybody else she's as hard as nails.'

'I imagine that bitter experiences have made her suspicious and reserved,' said Antonio. 'For that I don't blame her. But one thing pains me, beyond words. I can understand Miss Kaye-Templeman having prejudices against the Catholic Church; but she seems equally contemptuous of all religion.'

'At Sir Percy's house,' explained young Crowberry, 'or more strictly speaking, at Sir Percy's innumerable houses and lodgings, you can depend on meeting, any Sunday night, half a dozen second-rate men of science. They're all anti-Christians and most of them are blank atheists. I've heard them talk two or three times. Their position seems to be that we know more than our grandfathers did about the way the world is made; and, therefore, the world made itself. They can't argue; or, if they can, they don't. They coolly take it for granted that everybody who still clings to Christianity is an antiquated fool.'

'You think clearly, Edward, and you talk sensibly. In a minute I'm going to ask you about yourself,' said Antonio. 'But tell me. How far has this poor Miss Isabel been perverted by what she has heard?'

'When she consented to come and live here,' Edward replied, 'I heard somebody ask her how she would get on without an English church. Isabel simply answered: "If I've given up church-going in England, why should I begin it again in Portugal?"'

They emerged from the building and looked up the paths; but Sir Percy was not in sight. Antonio led his companion back to the spiral stairway; and when they were seated on the roof of the cloister he drew

forth the truth concerning young Crowberry's state of mind and soul.

From his English journals and reviews the monk had gathered some imperfect notions of the new ecclesiastical movement which a scholar of Cambridge had set going at Oxford. He knew the names of Pusey and of Newman, and was conversant with the main argument of the notorious 'Tract Ninety,' although it had issued from the press only a few months before. But it was from the lips of Edward Crowberry that he received his first connected account of the matter. The young man, as Antonio had said, thought clearly and talked sensibly. Unlike the leaders of the movement he was unembarrassed by the need to reconcile his new findings with his old utterances; and therefore he saw farther than much wiser men into the movement's future. Perhaps some of his more striking sentences had adhered to his mind after the perusal of books and articles; but he understood what he had read, and he had made it his own.

'Our English sceptics,' he said, 'have thought to take away from us our Christianity. Our Christianity remains; and we are also regaining the Church. In England the very idea of the Church had almost passed away. Our bishops had almost ceased to rule and to teach. Our sacraments had become mere commemorations—like birthdays and anniversaries. But the Church is emerging from the mists. I believe that in a hundred years from now hardly any Christianity will be professed save in communion with the Church. On the one side we shall have the ancient Church, boldly affirming supernatural religion, proclaiming the deposit of faith, cherishing her holy mysteries; and, on the

other, we shall have a great band of thinkers and teachers for whom this world is all. The nondescript waverers, betwixt and between, will disappear. There will be only Isabel Kay-Templemans and . . .'

'And Edward Crowberrys,' said Antonio, coming to the relief of his modesty. 'You prophesy boldly. But please make one point still plainer. What will this Church be? I have read something about a Via Media. Many of your writers seem to think there will be three Churches, the Eastern, the Western, and the English—Constantinople, Rome, and Canterbury. They seem to believe that the Church of England can purge herself of heresy while persisting in schism. Am I right?'

'You are right,' said young Crowberry. 'That is their hope. But do not judge them harshly. There is much in our national Church for us Englishmen to be proud of. And there is much in our history, much in our temperament, which will make our return to the Roman obedience a bitter pill to swallow. I know little of the Eastern Church. There are hardly any English books about it. But what has the East to do with England? On the point which divided West and East, England believes with the West. No. The only Church to which we can return is the Church from which we broke away.'

'You are young and sanguine,' returned Antonio. 'You will wait more than a hundred years before the English schism is ended. But I believe that, before you are middle-aged, you will see thousands of individuals returning home one by one. You have told me that these earnest men in Oxford claim to be fighting the battle of the Apostolical Succession. Those men will soon learn that they are already well advanced on

the road to re-union with the Apostolic See. The Church in England was destroyed by monarchs' commands and by lawyers' pens; but it cannot be restored, bodily, by similar means. It will be rebuilt out of individual converts, like the Churches founded by the apostles. It will not be a wholesale, sudden, man-made event like the conversion of the Franks after the baptism of Clovis.'

They sat silent, looking across the sea towards England, the hidden and beloved isle. At length Antonio asked:

'Does your father know which way your thoughts are running?'

'My father drinks and swears,' young Crowberry answered. 'But according to his lights he is a Christian. It is his teachers' fault, not his own, that he believes the Pope to be Anti-Christ, or the Man of Sin, or the Scarlet Woman. He ceased to read and think so long ago that his ideas cannot be changed. What would you have me do? I say nothing. I go my own way. The same with my friends. They think I'm a mere rattle like a few dry peas in a box. Let them. I prefer it.'

'But, sooner or later, you must take the great step and you must declare it. What will your father say then?'

'He will say what he always says when I cross him—that I shan't have a penny of his money. If he were still rich I could stand up and simply say, "Sir, keep the money; only pray let me call my soul my own." But I know, and he knows, and each of us knows the other knows, that there won't be a penny to leave. In his old age I must support my father, and I shall be

proud to do it. But, meanwhile, I can only hold my tongue.'

After another long pause the monk said:

'One more question. This young lady Isabel. You were so eager to know my opinion of her. Why? Is there anything between you?'

Young Crowberry laughed aloud; and only when his laughter had subsided through many guffaws and chucklings could he speak.

'Is there anything between me and Isabel?' he echoed. 'Yes. There is. By Jove, there's a good deal. There's an iron door. There's a brick wall. No, a stone wall—stone-cold, like a wall of ice. Anything between us? There's the whole world; also the sun, moon, planets, and fixed stars, not to mention a few comets and the Milky Way.' And he chuckled again.

'Yet you're greatly interested in her,' objected Antonio.

'No doubt,' admitted young Crowberry. 'I'm inquisitive. I'm mightily curious to know what there is behind the iron door, what there is over the brick wall. Not that it is reciprocal. Isabel thinks of me as a mere infant. Or, rather, Isabel doesn't think of me at all. She can't remember my existence; and I can't forget hers. She rubs up my quills the wrong way; but I can't even prick her fingers.'

'You know her ten times better than I do,' said Antonio. 'Yet, after our two meetings, I suspect that you misjudge her. Any hardness—and I haven't found her so hard, after all—may be her misfortune, rather than her fault, like her irreligion. To tell the truth, Edward, I thought you wanted to marry her.'

'Marry Isabel?' whistled the young man. 'I might

as well propose to marry Helen or Cleopatra. By the way, I don't believe that either Helen or Cleopatra was half so good-looking as Isabel. She's younger than either of 'em; but the point is that she's three years older than poor little Edward. No. Fortunately I don't want Isabel. If I did, it would be a sad case of unrequited affection.'

He fixed his eyes once more on the far-spread waters. When he spoke again, it was with a solemnity in strange contrast with his interlude of jesting.

'Senhor da Rocha,' he said. 'I shall never marry. For months this has been growing clearer and clearer to my mind. For the present I shall stick to my engineering. I shall make more in ten years out of tunnels and embankments than my father has made in thirty out of barrels and bottles. And afterwards? I don't know. But something is in store for me which forbids me to marry.'

His words moved Antonio deeply. Sixteen years before, his own vocation had proclaimed itself to his soul in this very way. He turned reverent eyes upon his companion; for had not God chosen this strange youth to be a priest and perhaps a monk? In repose Edward Crowberry's face was not without nobility. For the first time Antonio thoroughly understood him. He perceived that Edward's quickness to seize the humours of life connoted a deep sense of its pathos. Under the glittering spray of his jests and sarcasms was an unending undertone of world-woe. Young Crowberry saw, better than others, the sharp outlines of Time's successive moments because their infinitely varying curves and angles cut brilliant patterns in the near background of Eternity.

An inward voice spoke to Antonio. It was as clear as any of the commands which had guided him in the great crises of his history; and he obeyed it without parleying.

'Let us go down,' he said.

They went down. Sir Percy had not arrived. The monk walked out and scanned the path. Nobody was in sight.

'You believe,' he said to young Crowberry, as he re-entered the chapel, 'that some work, some sacred work, is reserved for you in the future? Are you willing to do a good work this very night?'

'You mean,' said the youth, 'am I willing to sit up with you and to disprove that monstrous tale about a monk's ghost? I am willing. I told you so yesterday.'

'No and Yes,' Antonio answered. 'We will disprove the midnight ghost. But I mean something else. Will you work with me against Sir Percy to save these azulejos?'

Young Crowberry started.

'It smacks of disloyalty to your friends, of disobedience to your father, of deceit all round,' Antonio went on. 'But think. We cannot serve your friends and your father better than by frustrating a sacrilege of which they will be ashamed when the gains are spent. Remember, these azulejos are not Sir Percy's. He has paid to the Government, which stole this place, hardly more than a tenth of the price, and he has no right to carry a handful of dust or a chip of stone outside the gates. Don't answer me in a hurry. Refuse if your conscience so bids you, and I shall not complain.'

He walked away and sat down in his old stall. Young Crowberry moved slowly to the white marble doorpost

set in the blue midst of the azulejos and leaned against it, with his head bowed. At the end of five minutes he strode boldly up to the sanctuary rail and said:

'I will help.'

Footsteps resounded in the cloister, and, a few seconds later, Mr. Crowberry and Sir Percy appeared, talking loudly. They kept their hats on their heads and their cigars in their mouths. The baronet, who carried a glazed jar, was so intent on his operations that he forgot to greet the monk.

'Well?' asked Mr. Crowberry, sidling close to Antonio. 'You've turned up? And you've come to your senses?'

'From your point of view, my answer is No,' said the monk. 'I have not come to my senses. Has Sir Percy come to his? Does he still persist in removing what isn't his own?'

'He persists,' said Mr. Crowberry. 'And I can't blame him. If he doesn't steal the stuff, somebody else will. Now take my advice. Don't be an ass. Ten minutes ago, up at the house, Sir Percy nearly blew his daughter's head off for suggesting that the azulejos should be left alone. They've got to come down. Give him a lift and you can make your own terms about the lease of the vineyards. Cross him, and you will lose the vineyards—and the azulejos'll come down all the same.'

'Hallo, you've come!' bawled out Sir Percy to Antonio. 'We've been waiting for you all day. Hurry up and look at my saw.'

The monk stepped forward.

The frame of the circular saw was ingeniously secured to the face of the azulejos by means of leather suckers,

such as boys play with among cobble-stones. This simple and portable device served its purpose without doing the tiles the smallest harm. The saw itself had a gear which caused it to descend in the frame as the teeth cut their way downward. Mounting the short ladder at Sir Percy's bidding, Antonio saw that a groove had been chiselled in the cement and that it was filled with an evil-smelling mixture of acids.

'First, we took off that white stone,' explained Sir Percy, pointing to the marble cornice. 'D'ye see? Then we cut out this channel. D'ye see? Mark the principle. The great thing is, not to try and get the azulejos off the cement, but to get the cement, azulejos, and all, off the wall. D'ye see? It doesn't matter how rough we are with the front of the wall and the back of the cement, so long as we don't crack the tile. That's the principle. D'ye see? Now, pour in a pint or so of this.'

'You'll do it better yourself,' said Antonio, descending the ladder. Sir Percy promptly climbed up and poured out another acid from his stone jar.

'The acids rot the cement,' he went on. 'That's the principle. They disintegrate it. You see? Then the saw sets to work. It goes through the cement as if it's Bath brick. We shall get down two lots of azulejos in two places. That'll give us elbow-room for cutting through the cement backs of the lot between with a mason's saw. You understand—a long saw with two handles? D'ye see? The acid and the round saw here and there; and the long saw in between. That's the principle.'

The baronet stared at Antonio, waiting for his opinion.

'Well?' he demanded impatiently.

'I am quite unable,' said the monk coolly, 'to suggest the smallest improvement in your Excellency's invention. But the daylight is failing. If your Excellency works by candle-light or lamp-light, some azulejos will probably be broken. Let the acids work all night; and let us all meet here at eight o'clock tomorrow morning.'

'Nonsense,' cried Sir Percy. 'We've time to get down the first lot.'

'And what about dinner?' asked Crowberry *père*, in great alarm.

'Yes. Dinner?' echoed Crowberry *fils*.

'Dinner be hanged!' cried Sir Percy angrily.

'Your Excellency must give the acids all night to work,' said Antonio.

'Yes, your Excellency really must,' added young Crowberry. 'Perhaps your Excellency has forgotten that the great Carthaginian Hannibal likewise employed an acid—namely vinegar—to make rocks friable, during his famous crossing of the Alps, as is narrated by the historian Livy in his twenty-first book. I know the passage well, having had to copy it out twenty times at school for putting pepper in the usher's pipe.'

'Shut up!' snapped his indignant father. But the youth was not abashed.

'If Hannibal left his puddles of vinegar out all night,' he said, 'I, for one, cannot be a party to your Excellency's doing differently. I'm off.'

He moved away. Antonio followed. Mr. Crowberry senior, glad of any excuse to get back punctually for dinner, hurried in their train. Sir Percy gaped after

them in deep disgust. Then he flung down his chisel upon the pavement and strode out after the others.

'At eleven o'clock to-night,' whispered young Crowberry in Antonio's ear.

'At eight o'clock to-morrow morning,' said Antonio in a loud voice.

He went his way and they went theirs.

VIII

HAD the black monk's ghost attended his vigil in the abbey chapel young Crowberry could hardly have seen it. His labours among the azulejos preoccupied him for over four hours, and it was within an hour of dawn when he stole back on tip-toe to his room in the guest-house.

As for Antonio, he did not go to bed at all. After parting from young Crowberry at the chapel-door, he hastened straight to wake up José; and as soon as he had made sure that José understood the part he had to play, it was time for the monk's morning splash in the deepest pool of the brook. After Antonio had shaved and dressed himself with unusual care, both master and man sat down to a first breakfast much ampler than usual; for who could tell what might befall?

The monk took care to arrive a few minutes late at the chapel. Sir Percy was there already, high on his ladder.

'Hallo,' he cried, without wasting breath or time in saying a Good morning. 'The stuff works. D'ye hear? It works. We shall cut through the cement like cheese.'

'Don't say cheese,' pleaded young Crowberry, appearing in the doorway. 'It makes me hungry. Say putty, or chalk, or soft soap.'

He was swept into the chapel by Mrs. Baxter, who suddenly filled the doorway like a wave bursting through an arch on a limestone coast. Behind Mrs. Baxter could

be heard the loud voice of Mr. Crowberry. Antonio advanced to greet the lady and to express his hope that she was well.

'No, Signor Da Rocha, I am *not* well,' responded Mrs. Baxter tartly. 'Since you ask me, I am very ill indeed. But who cares? I have long ceased to look for gratitude; but it seems that I must no longer expect common humanity.'

'By common humanity, ma'am,' said young Crowberry, 'I assume you mean ham and eggs, or possibly kidneys and bacon. I too, alas, have looked for them in vain.'

'I allude,' said Mrs. Baxter severely, 'to the fact that I have been dragged from bed, despite my sick and suffering condition, without a morsel of breakfast, to catch my death of cold at an unearthly hour in this living tomb. I do not allude, Mr. Edward, to kidneys and bacon.'

'What's this about kidneys and bacon?' demanded Mr. Crowberry, hurrying up with an eagerness which made him almost sprightly. 'Where? When? How on earth have you managed it?'

Antonio abandoned the two voluptuaries to the tender mercies of young Crowberry; for Isabel was standing in the doorway. Her walk through the morning air had painted her cheeks a delicate rose-pink; but, as she stood among them with white ungloved hands shewing against her blue dress of fine stuff, and with a large white feather curled round her blue hat, she seemed like the azulejos, all blue and white.

'So you have come to see the end?' she said.

'Who knows?' he retorted, smiling sadly. 'Will the saw survive the acid? We shall see. But I crave

leave to thank you. You have interceded with your illustrious father.'

'I have,' she said, 'and my illustrious father simply ordered me off to bed, like a small child. You don't understand him. He has never noticed that I am grown up into quite an old young woman. He still calls Mrs. Baxter my governess. I believe he thinks she still gives me lessons in arithmetic and spelling. I did my best; but it was worse than nothing.'

'If you had succeeded triumphantly,' he answered, with one of his unconscious glances into the depths of her eyes, 'I could not be more grateful than I am.'

Young Crowberry came forward and presented his morning compliments. He added that Sir Percy had found a defect in the vertical traveller of his circular saw and that he wished to be unbothered by onlookers while he put it right. The young man went on to suggest that it might divert that Excellent Creature Mrs. Baxter from the contemplation of her wrongs if they shewed her round the monastery.

Grumbling gruffly at his fate, Mr. Crowberry the elder joined the party. Mrs. Baxter composed her features to an iron immobility. She was evidently determined to approve of nothing.

'I confess, ma'am,' said young Crowberry, 'that the humble entertainment we have to offer is poorer in excitement than some others; for example, than the public hangings which are provided for the nobility and gentry of our own country at this same hour of eight o'clock.'

Nobody laughed.

'You are standing,' the youth rattled on, 'in a monastery, or monasterium. The word is derived,

ma'am, as you are aware, from *monachus*, a monk, and *sterium*, a sterium. This passage is called a corridor, from *curro*, meaning "I run," and *dor*, a door. You observe the doors on both sides. With your permission, ma'am, we will proceed to the kitchen.'

The white kitchen was filled with bright sunshine. The sun's beams came flashing back from the great hood of burnished copper, and the singing torrent was quick with glancing lights. Young Crowberry shewed Mrs. Baxter the long turnspit, turned by a wheel at the end, and gravely assured her that it was capable of roasting a pigeon, whole.

'What is that word *Paz*, between the windows?' asked Isabel.

'It is Portuguese for "Peace," the watchword of the Benedictine order,' Antonio answered. 'The monks here were Benedictines.'

'What were they here for?' Mr. Crowberry demanded.

Antonio hesitated. Then he quietly gave the answer:

'To pray, and to praise God.'

'Praise God, indeed!' cried Mr. Crowberry. 'A fine way of praising God to stuff and guzzle from one year's end to another! I'll tell you what it is, da Rocha. You've got your tongue in your cheek. You're a man with fifty times too much sense to believe that the Almighty is pleased with the praises of a greasy pack of gormandisers and soakers. Thank goodness your country has turned 'em out.'

He strode out of the kitchen with all the dignity of a churchwarden carrying the collection-plate into the vestry. The others followed.

'What is behind these doors?' demanded Mr. Crowberry.

'Cells,' said Antonio, curtly.

'Cells?'

'Why not, sir?' asked young Crowberry, in honeyed tones. 'Why not cells here as in other penitential establishments? All the best prisons have them. I thought it was a matter of common knowledge that the principal occupation of a monk when he gets into a monastery is to prevent the other monks getting out.'

'Shut up!' snapped his father, striding on.

Mrs. Baxter spoke at last. She adventured the point of her shoe and the tip of her nose into Antonio's cell, which had been left open.

'Is this the condemned cell, Mr. Edward?' she asked with a shudder.

'They're all condemned cells, ma'am, Edward answered. 'Every monk was condemned to penal servitude for life. At the end of his term he was taken out to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. A few days after, he was buried alive, or walled up. If this didn't cure him of his errors the Abbot began to think it was really time for something to be done; and he was sentenced to take a bath.'

Antonio turned away, grievously wounded. After their solemn conversations on the highest and holiest things, these jests scorched him like hot irons. But, upon reflection, he could condone much of young Crowberry's offence. Doubtless the youth had a good motive in plying the edged tool of ridicule against the prejudices of his companions. But his main excuse lay in his inability to take monks seriously. The youth did not know that Antonio was himself a monk, and that this had been Antonio's cell and that Antonio had spoken to his Lord within it. He had never consciously met a

monk in his life. Monks to him were like mailed knights to a reader of historical novels; they were merely the picturesque literary fictions of Mrs. Radcliffe, of Sir Walter Scott, of 'Monk' Lewis. Or, rather, monks to young Crowberry were pretty much what exorcists had been to Antonio. Although the Church still ordained exorcists, and exorcists were [illegible]ed for every Good Friday, Antonio had turned [illegible] than one light pleasantry about them.

Nevertheless the monk could [illegible]e wished that young Crowberry had spoken otherwise. When every allowance had been made, his irony remained more mischievous than useful; and Antonio determined to counteract it. Turning to Mrs. Baxter he gave her a rapid sketch of a monk's day. At the very outset, when he told her how every monk answered the loud knock at his door before daybreak with 'Thanks be to God!' the Excellent Creature shivered; but, in spite of herself, she grew interested. Even Mr Crowberry condescended to return and give the [illegible] his grudging attention. But at Isabel Antonio threw only two furtive glances; for she seemed to be hearing him with distaste.

'Thank you,' snorted Crowberry [illegible] as the monk's voice ceased. 'You merely confirm [illegible]at I've always said. For my part I believe that the Almighty intended us to enjoy the good things of life. If not, why did He provide 'em? Pssh! Humbug! D'ye mean to tell me, sir, that the Almighty's pleased with all this nonsensical fasting—with madmen clemming 'emselves till they're like a gang of scarecrows, with their bones sticking out through their skins? No, da Rocha, you don't. I tell you again that you've got your tongue in your cheek.'

'Apparently Mr. da Rocha has his tongue in both his cheeks at once,' put in Crowberry *fils*. 'I gather, sir, that these regrettable monks were, at one and the same time, a gang of bony scarecrows starving themselves to death and also a pack of fat and greasy gormandisers and guzzlers. Such Jesuitical duplicity makes me shudder.'

'Come to think of it,' blurted out his father, 'I shouldn't be surprised if da Rocha here is a Jesuit monk in disguise. Where's his whiskers? Where's his wife? I don't call it natural.'

'A Jesuit monk?' moaned Mrs. Baxter, recoiling in horror. 'How dreadful!' And she grabbed at Isabel's arm as if to snatch a helpless victim out of danger.

'There's no such thing as a Jesuit monk, madam,' smiled Antonio. 'The Jesuits are a Society, not a monastic order.'

'There are Jesuit nuns, anyhow,' muttered Mrs. Baxter, scowling darkly. 'England is full of them.'

'Pardon me,' explained Antonio, keeping all his good temper. 'That can hardly be. There are women-Benedictines, women-Dominicans, women-Carmelites, and so on; but there's no such thing as a woman-Jesuit.'

'Pardon me, too,' retorted Mrs. Baxter warmly. 'I am English and I ought to know. I repeat that England is full of female Jesuits. So how can you stand there, Signor, and say that Jesuits are never women?'

'They are women, of course,' interrupted Mr. Crowberry, 'old women. Silly old women. Why, they walk about in petticoats, and nothing pleases 'em so much as putting on finery and dressing up images, like little girls dressing up dolls. Tut! But come, da Rocha,

out with the truth. I'll lay you a dozen of old Madeira against half a dozen of your new champagne that you can't swear your Bible oath that you aren't a Jesuit in disguise.'

'I won't have the Madeira; but lend me your pocket Bible,' demanded Antonio.

'Lay your hand on your heart, instead,' Mr. Crowberry answered.

It was plainly necessary to take up the gauntlet which had been thrown down; so Antonio placed his hand on his heart, and said:

'I swear I am not a Jesuit, either in disguise or out of it. I never was a Jesuit; am not now; and never shall be.'

'Amen,' said Mr. Crowberry, not without traces of thankfulness and earnestness in his tones. 'I'm glad you're letting me off the old Madeira. Hallo! Time's up. Here's Sir Percy.'

'D'ye hear? Am I to wait all day while you stand there chattering?' Sir Percy bawled out. And he strode back into the chapel.

Everybody made haste to follow. But before they could see whence it proceeded a horrible noise set their teeth on edge. It was as though somebody was creaking a basket-lid near a hive of buzzing bees. Antonio knew that the saw had begun to revolve. He pressed forward and found Sir Percy's grey-headed stolid man-servant Jackson working a treadle at the foot of the azulejos. High above Jackson's head the saw was grinding round in the acidulated cement.

'It works!' cried Sir Percy. 'D'ye hear, all of you? D'ye see? It works!'

As the saw's teeth bit and chewed the acrid cud a fine gritty dust flew up into a sunbeam and glittered like

the spray of a waterfall. The noise increased, until it resembled the drawing of a great slate pencil backwards along a vast slate. Isabel and Mrs. Baxter put their fingers in their ears.

'It works, it works, it works!' repeated Sir Percy. His eyes shone. Antonio glanced at him and shuddered. One moment he looked like a boy of twenty; the next, he looked a hundred years old.

The saw went on gnawing, gnawing, biting, biting, screaming, screaming, like an obscene fiend, until the back of one azulejo seemed to be wholly cut through. This first azulejo—a tile about eight inches long—formed part of the multi-coloured border which framed the picture of the Saint's pious boyhood. Antonio watched it with a white face and a thumping heart. Suddenly he shouted:

'Look out! Stand clear!'

Almost in the same instant the tile leapt forward and crashed down upon the pavement, smashing up into four or five pieces. Mrs. Baxter wailed aloud. Isabel sprang like a flash to examine the damage, and the others were soon at her elbows. They found that the saw had cut down cleanly to a certain distance; but the tile had fallen outward before the scission was complete, and the cement on its lower part had broken jaggedly from the wall.

Sir Percy closed and opened his eyes like a man dazed. Isabel moved to his side. But he recovered himself swiftly and brushed her away.

'What does it matter?' he demanded, in great wrath and scorn. 'What are you all standing there like stuck pigs for? It's the border. We can mend it. What does it matter? D'ye hear?'

He cast a glance at the saw. It was correctly placed for cutting down the azulejo which stood below its fallen neighbour. Waving Jackson aside he placed his own foot on the treadle and worked away with feverish energy. Hummings, creakings, and screamings once more filled the holy place.

After the onlookers had fallen back a few yards, the monk found himself close to Isabel. He did not look at her, nor she at him; but he felt instinctively that she was not on his side. Standing with tense limbs and straining eyes she seemed to be putting her whole mind and will towards her father's triumph and Antonio's defeat.

'Take care of your skulls!' sang out young Crowberry. His light tenor voice rose almost to a scream.

Jackson jumped clear; but Sir Percy held his ground until the second azulejo lay shattered at his feet. Then he ceased working the treadle and moved with slow, short steps into the middle of the nave. As he did so the saw, framework and all, plunged after the azulejo with a tremendous crash.

In contrast with the hideous noises which had preceded it, the silence in the chapel was uncanny. Mr. Crowberry sat down abruptly on an old black bench. Mrs. Baxter wiped away real or simulated tears. Antonio and Isabel, once more side by side, stared at the ruins of the saw and its gear. Young Crowberry leaned glumly against the doorpost. Jackson maintained his deaf-mute stolidity.

Sir Percy began to walk up and down the nave. His military rigidity was gone; and instead of standing as straight as a poplar he bent and crouched like a thunder-blasted, storm-beaten oak. Antonio, in his moment of

victory, suddenly caught sight of Sir Percy's eyes. They were like the eyes of a long-hunted, worn-out tiger brought suddenly to bay; and, at the sight of them, the monk's heart nearly broke with love and pity. Involuntarily he took a step or two towards the stricken man.

'Get out of my way!' thundered Sir Percy, blazing into terrible anger. 'Clear out!'

A chisel was lying in his path. With the toe of his finely-made boot he dealt it so forcible a kick that the iron went ringing across the pavement and chipped a petal from a rose in the lower bor:er of the Saint's Shipwreck. As he strode towards Jackson he limped a little.

'So your dead monks have fought for you and won,' said Isabel bitterly, turning round upon Antonio.

'Sir Percy will try again,' he answered.

'My father never tries again,' said she, once more turning away her face.

Just then they heard a sickening cry of pain; and the monk saw Sir Percy drop heavily from the top of the short ladder. Jackson caught him as he fell. The luckless baronet had been trying to discover the cause of his failure and had thrust his hand into a pool of burning acid. He sank against Jackson's rock-like shoulder and swooned away.

Antonio instantly took command. His strong voice rang through the chapel like a brazen trumpet.

'Mr. Crowberry,' he said, 'run to the kitchen. There are bowls on a dresser. Bring us water from the stream at once. Edward, rush up to the house. Bring oil and lint—oil and silk or linen or whatever you can. Mrs. Baxter, you will kindly go and prepare his bed at once.'

He did not name Isabel; for she was already bending

over her father with such anguish in her blue eyes that Antonio could hardly bear the sight. For a moment he was forced to turn aside.

'Take heart,' he said softly in her ear, as soon as he was able to speak. 'We shall bring him round. For an hour or two, I fear he will have great pain; but there is an ointment at my farm which will give him ease. Be brave. Cheer up. He must not open his eyes on weeping faces.'

While Jackson unfastened the prostrate man's collar and Mr. Crowberry bathed his forehead with cold water from the torrent, Antonio hurried through the doorway and sped up the spiral stairs which led to the roof of the cloister. But, about six feet from the top, he pushed open a sombre door and entered a long attic which ran over the ceilings of the monk's cells, parallel with the north wall of the chapel.

In the faint light he made out José faithfully crouching in the place which had been appointed him. By his side lay an old ramrod and a mallet. In the mortar between the granite blocks of the wall were the holes which Antonio and young Crowberry had bored in the night. Their measurements were so exact that José's ramrod had easily struck out the azulejos the moment he heard the preconcerted signals of 'Look out!' and 'Take care of your skulls!'

'Did I do right, your Worship, in knocking over that skriking saw as well?' asked José.

'You did right,' said Antonio quickly. 'We have won; and now we must care for the enemy's wounded. Sir Percy has burnt his hand with acid. Run to the farm. Open the green box. Bring back the yellow ointment as fast as your legs can carry you.'

José raced off, hiding ramrod and mallet under his coat. Hardly had he vanished before it flashed across Antonio's mind that some virtue might remain in the drugs which the Cellarer had left behind four years before. He found the cupboard, smashed it open, and ran back to the chapel with oil, lint, ointment, and a cordial.

When José reappeared he was just in time to take a hand with Antonio and Jackson in carrying Sir Percy back to the guest-house. Young Crowberry had ridden off for the Navares doctor. In the baronet's comfortless room the monk lavished all his leech-craft; and soon, under the sway of a strong draught, the sufferer fell asleep.

Isabel accompanied Antonio to the door. He cut short her thanks, and was hurrying away homeward after José, when he heard her light step behind him. She had something to say; but her courage failed her and she did not say it.

'There is something else that I can do?' asked the monk.

'Yes,' she answered, with a great effort. 'You can . . . you can promise . . .'

'I can promise . . . what?'

Isabel blushed furiously.

'Nothing,' she said. 'Good-bye.'

She fled back to the steps. But he caught her and seized the white hand which was about to turn the brass knob.

'You shall tell me,' he insisted, mastering her with his velvet eyes. 'I can promise . . . what?'

'You can promise,' she said, looking on the ground, 'that I may see you again.'

BOOK V

ISABEL

I

A CHARIOT was at the guest-house door when Antonio called to enquire about Sir Percy's progress. At the horses' heads stood Jackson, waiting. Rugs, portmanteaux, and a brass-clamped trunk had already been strapped in their places.

'H'llo!' sang out young Crowberry's light voice from the top of the steps. 'You're the very man we were coming to see. We were coming to say good-bye.'

'You and your father?'

'I and my father and Sir Percy. We're off to Lisbon. The doctor from Navares was here all yesterday afternoon. Seemed rather clever. He liked the way you'd dressed the hand; but he doesn't like Sir Percy's general health, especially his heart. So the guv'nor and I are taking him to the chief Lisbon doctor. We shall go to Oporto by sea next week—the guv'nor and I—and from there to London.'

He descended the bottom step; and, after marching off Antonio by the arm to a spot out of Jackson's hearing, he added:

'Don't get the idea that I repent of helping to save the azulejos. We did the right thing. All the same, I'm not happy about it. In a sense we're to blame for Sir Percy's burnt hand. Hang it, he's a brick, after all! I couldn't stand pain like that. He doesn't give a single moan. But it isn't Sir Percy who upsets me most. It's

Isabel. I said she was all head and no heart. By Jove, think of it! No heart! Yet she's hardly left his bedside these twenty-four hours. She waits on him hand and foot; and sometimes the look in her eyes is just about as much as I can stand.'

'This Isabel certainly has a heart,' said Antonio. 'If she's unlike other people, it's because she has more heart, not less. I hope the Senhorita will not be fatigued by her journey to Lisbon.'

'She isn't going.'

'Not going? You don't intend to leave these ladies alone?'

'No. We're leaving them in charge of a friend. Besides, there'll be Jackson.'

'The friend is a man?'

'Quite. He's a man from top to toe. His name is Francisco Manoel Oliveira da Rocha.'

Before the monk could reply, they were joined by Mr. Crowberry, to whom Jackson had announced Antonio's arrival.

'You're welcome, da Rocha,' he said heartily. 'This will save us an hour. We were meaning to call and see you on our way to Lisbon. Teddy has told you the news. We want you to be as neighbourly as you can to the ladies. It will only be for eight or nine days.'

'I shall be happy to serve the Senhoras,' answered Antonio.

'Happy? So you ought to be. But you don't look it. Come, damn it all, what did you tell me yourself? The worst of the year's work is over; and you said you were going to study. My advice is . . . Don't. Give yourself a rest. Run up here of an evening for a bit of music or a game of cribbage.'

'Or for a quiet pipe and glass with that Excellent Creature Mrs. Baxter,' put in young Edward.

'Do the Senhoras approve of this?' asked Antonio.

'We didn't ask 'em,' Mr. Crowberry answered. 'But never fear. They'll jump at it.'

'And Sir Percy?'

'He approves of you entirely. Y' see, da Rocha, I've been giving you glowing testimonials. I've said that if I were the Grand Turk himself I would trust you with the latch-key of the harem. I don't doubt though,' added Mr. Crowberry, chuckling and digging at Antonio's ribs, 'that you've been a bit of a dog in your time. Eh? And none the worst for it either. Still, the point is you're as steady as an old horse, now. Besides, supposing you wanted to make love to Isabel, it would be all the same. You'd simply get a frost-bite.'

'I am entirely at the service of all your Excellencies,' said Antonio, rather stiffly.

'Thanks,' Mr. Crowberry answered. 'But don't be too much at the service of Mrs. Baxter. Between ourselves, she's a selfish, lazy, avaricious old humbug. She looks the picture of good temper; but don't be taken in. Mrs. Baxter boasts that she has stuck to the Kaye-Templemans through thick and thin; but she's buttered her own bread thick all the time. She is a rich woman—all out of Sir Percy. When the ship begins to sink, Mrs. Baxter 'll be the first to rat.'

'Then how must I treat her?' Antonio asked.

'Simply leave her alone. She'll spend her days in bed, like a dormouse—only, dormice don't wake up every four hours to ask if it isn't feeding-time. Even while Sir Percy has been in all this pain, Mrs. Baxter

has had the servants running about after her the same as usual.'

'What about Jackson?'

'Oh, he'll sleep all day too. He'll find a snug corner and smoke and doze till dinner-time. But he doesn't soak. And, if there's work to do, he'll do it. Jackson's all right. But come inside.'

On the threshold of the large room Isabel met them. Want of sleep had paled her cheeks and dulled her eyes; but an unwonted softness of expression made her more beautiful in the monk's view than ever before. He could not help feeling glad that she was remaining behind, and proud that she was to be in his charge. Isabel led Antonio straight to Sir Percy, who was sitting in a rocking-chair with his arm in a sling.

The baronet was more changed than his daughter. He looked weak and old; but he was no longer distraught. After he had answered Antonio's enquiries gratefully, he said:

'Senhor da Rocha, it is possible I have behaved towards you with curtness or even with downright uncouthness. If so, I ask your pardon most sincerely, and I beg you to set it all down to my preoccupation with a scheme which has failed. My daughter and I will never forget your kindness. Indeed, we are about to presume still further upon it. You know that I shall be absent a few days in Lisbon, and we are hoping that you will be so very good as to come now and then to this house.'

It seemed strange to Antonio. But he reflected that the English were strange people, and that Sir Percy was far stranger than most of his compatriots. Again, he reflected that neither Sir Percy nor Mr. Crowberry,

in spite of their friendliness, regarded him as other than a simple farmer who would never cease to be conscious of their differences of station. Accordingly he replied:

'Far from asking me a service, your Excellency, on the contrary, is doing me a great honour. I value it so much that he may take his journey with an easy mind.'

Jackson brought in two bottles of tawny port, bearing the familiar label of Castro and de Mattos. Healths were drunk all round; and although Sir Percy, Isabel, and Antonio did not drink more than two full glasses between them, the bottles were quickly emptied. Farewells were said. Then Sir Percy was placed in the carriage, with Crowberry *père* at his side. Crowberry *fils* climbed upon the box, accompanied by the Portuguese groom who had come with the party from Oporto. At Sir Percy's suggestion Antonio took the vacant seat opposite Mr. Crowberry, so that he should save his legs a mile of the journey home. Before entering the carriage, however, the monk turned to Isabel and enquired:

'At what hours will my visits be least unacceptable to the Senhoras?'

'Come up this afternoon,' cried Mr. Crowberry, emphatically. 'It'll be to-day they'll feel loneliest, when all we noisy nuisances are gone. To-day and to-morrow.'

'But you need sleep?' said Antonio to Isabel. He intended to express no more than his genuine solicitude; but his soft eyes met hers with another glance of unconscious tenderness. She coloured so noticeably that he made haste to add: 'So I will not come until four o'clock.'

Standing on tiptoe beside the chariot Isabel gave her father a single kiss. It was plain that such outward

marks of affection were not often exchanged between them, and that the public giving and taking of this one kiss meant more than a thousand kisses between less reserved beings. Even young Crowberry seemed to notice it, as though he had eyes in his back; for he cracked a whip and the chariot lurched on its way.

At four o'clock Antonio found Mrs. Baxter waiting in state to receive him. Although the light blue silk dress into which she had packed herself for the occasion made the Excellent Creature look almost as broad as long she was not a wholly unpleasing body. Her hair, primly parted in the middle and drawn tightly over her temples, was still glossy and black. Her insistent smile shewed white and regular teeth, and the colour in her cheeks gave her a buxom and wholesome look in odd contrast with her hypochondriac complaints. She wore a very large oval brooch containing a lock of hair which, presumably, had pertained to the lamented Baxter; also gold ear-rings and a fine gold chain.

It soon became evident that Mr. Crowberry had been descanting upon Antonio's importance; for Mrs. Baxter was determined to convince the visitor of her own past greatness. She monopolised the conversation. Beginning with an account of a happy girlhood spent amidst every luxury in a part of England unnamed, she went on to speak of her rashly romantic marriage with the dashing ne'er-do-well Baxter; of her universally-envied beauty as a bride; of her tearing her veil in church, and of her coming out in a gust of rain to find a black cat sitting on the vicar's first wife's gravestone —three infallible portents of evil. Next, of the handsome but unpractical Baxter's prompt and inconsiderate

demise; of the un-Christian obduracy of her flint-hearted father who would neither forgive nor finance his headstrong offspring; and of the entirely diabolical behaviour of the surviving Baxters.

Up to this point Isabel had sat bending over some embroidery, with an air of finding all such work distasteful; but when the Excellent Creature began putting the finishing touches to her character-sketch of the late Miss Caroline Sophia Baxter she got up unostentatiously and went softly to the window. Mrs. Baxter did not mind, but proceeded to praise the admirable Providence which had suddenly thrown her into the path of dear Lady Kaye-Templeman. A hundred details followed, and Antonio's eye began to rove. Nor did it rove vainly; for when Mrs. Baxter explained how she and dear Lady Kaye-Templeman had grown to be practically two sisters, the monk saw the slender girl in the window tap the floor impatiently with her small foot.

'Of course I was with her at the end,' said Mrs. Baxter, mopping away tears. 'How could I have been anywhere else? Her last thoughts were of her darling child. "Clara," she said to me, "promise me that you will never desert my Isabel."'

The small foot tapped more sharply.

'And I never *nave* deserted her,' concluded the Excellent Creature, 'although families of the highest quality and the first respectability have sought to induce me, by the most tempting offers, to enter their establishments. No, Signor, I've never deserted poor Isabel and, until she is dead or married, I never will.'

'There are clouds coming up from the Atlantic,' said Isabel, turning round abruptly. 'Mrs. Baxter, we must

either lose the pleasure of Mr. da Rocha's company or else let him be soaked through.'

Filled with a deep dread of the dreary half-hour when, having recited her own history, she must listen to another's, Mrs. Baxter was relieved to see Antonio go. The Iberian flourishes which adorned his parting compliments completed her satisfaction. Why had no one ever spoken so nicely to her in England? She shook hands with Antonio and very graciously pressed him to come and drink tea as soon as he should be able.

Isabel accompanied him to the top of the stone steps.

'I'm so sorry,' she said.

'Sorry?'

'About Mrs. Baxter. No! Don't say anything insincere. I know as well as you do that you hated it as much as I did. I could put up with the tale when it was half truth and half white lies. But it has changed with every telling until it's nearly all jet-black fibs. My mother liked her poor friends more than her rich ones; but Mrs. Baxter was not her friend. Nor is Mrs. Baxter's name Clara. It is plain Jane.'

Antonio smiled. 'Anyhow, I've got it over,' he said. 'It had to come, some time or other. But where are your clouds that are going to drench me to the skin?'

'Over there,' answered Isabel, pointing to one tiny milk-white cirrus adrift in the clear blue lake of heaven. 'It's as large as a man's hand. You think I'm irreligious; but I've read the Bible, and I remember something about a cloud no bigger than a man's hand which worked some miracle.'

'That little cloud delivered Israel from drought and from famine,' said Antonio.

'And this little cloud has delivered you from Mrs. Baxter and from . . . me,' she retorted.

'It is banishing me from you,' said Antonio, with prompt gallantry.

'If you wish to see me again—though I can't think why you should,' she said, in as colourless a tone as she could command, 'don't always come in the afternoon, or to the house. Mrs. Baxter will drive you mad. Come in the morning, to the ravine—that pretty pool with the cascade and the stepping-stones. I shall be there reading on fine days. It's a shame to pen you up in a stuffy house. Besides, you said it was your favourite spot. Mrs. Baxter is calling. Good-bye.'

II

When Isabel reached the pool with the stepping-stones Antonio was already there. He could have wished that Miss Kaye-Templeman had not suggested what might look like surreptitious meetings; but, being a Portuguese gentleman as well as a monk, he could do no other than attend her at the place she had appointed.

It was a perfect morning. The sun shone more hotly and brightly than on many a day of July, making one thankful for the shade of the trees and for the cold spray of the waterfall. Hundreds of birds were singing, and a great Japanese medlar scented the air. Yet, after half an hour or so of uneasy talk on commonplace topics, the monk turned home again with a smarting breast.

Somehow the lady gave him a feeling that he had intruded; that he had committed an indelicacy in so swiftly taking her at her word; and that he was beginning to bore her. The afternoon before, on the top of the steps, she had seemed sorry to see him go; but, at the stepping-stones, she seemed rather to regret his having come. While her politeness was unexceptionable, their good-comradeship appeared to be at an end.

His failure to retain her favour piqued Antonio. Like many another monk before him, he had often found pleasure in the belief that, if need arose, he could hold his own as a man of the world. Nor did the pleasantness of such a belief spring altogether from sinful

pride. He had sought to hallow God's name and to hasten the coming of the Kingdom by sacrificing his share of life's delights and excitements ; and he naturally preferred to think that the world he had renounced was a world in which he would have triumphed and not a world in which he would have blundered and failed. The first eventful days which followed the arrival of all these English people at the abbey had ministered so subtly to his complacency that the awakening was all the ruder. Beneath the surface of his monkish humility the natural man began to stir proudly and imperiously towards the regaining of his dominance.

The next day was Sunday. So as to save the faces of poor Margarida and her family, Antonio avoided the ten o'clock crowd and fulfilled his obligation at the seven o'clock low Mass. This was the Mass most favoured of the local Saints and Blessed Ones ; but although the cura and the worshippers were full of quiet devotion the monk found it hard to keep his thoughts from wandering. Nearly all the way home Isabel tripped daintily hither and thither before his mind's eyes. He soon decided that he must not present himself again either at pool or at guest-house for a day or two ; but this resolution only enhanced the dreariness of his mood.

Reaching the farm about nine o'clock he was about to prepare his lonely breakfast when José appeared with a letter. It had been brought, he said, by Sir Percy's Portuguese servant, whom José proceeded to denounce as an inquisitive minx and a saucy chatterbox. Antonio broke the seal and read :

Mrs. Baxter presents her compliments to Signor da

Rocha and requests the pleasure of his company to-morrow (Sunday) afternoon, for tea. Mrs. B. trusts that Signor R. reached home yesterday before the shower.

Saturday Evening.

Underneath Mrs. Baxter's expansive script the monk saw a few infinitesimal characters, so minute that in spite of his keen eyes he was forced to hold them up to the light. At first they looked like a wavy and broken line, about half an inch long; but he deciphered them at last. They ran:

Do come. I. K-T.

'For instance,' said José indignantly. 'She asked me point-blank, plump out, whether your Worship is engaged to be married.'

Antonio wheeled round so sharply that he almost let the paper fall. It took him some moments to realise that José was not quoting Isabel, but only Isabel's servant.

'I up and asked her, straight off, if she was engaged to be married herself,' continued José. 'And when she said No, I said, "With a tongue like that I don't wonder at it." Then she went home.'

Antonio forced a laugh and turned back to light a couple of pine-cones on the hearth. But when José had set out for church he picked up the note again and read Isabel's message thrice over. Only nine letters; yet they harped and sang around him as if they had been the Nine Muses, and all his heaviness and dreariness fled away from their silver voices.

Later on, while he was conning his breviary under the

orange-trees, the monk suddenly faced a question. It came to him as he recited the None psalm *Quomodo dilexi legem*, at the words *tota die meditatio mea est*. Could he truthfully say that his 'meditation all day long' was still upon God? He examined his conscience.

The result was not unsatisfactory. After years of loneliness his mind surely needed the tonic of intercourse with minds of its own order. Mr. Crowberry and his son had certainly wrecked his plan of autumn meditation and study; but, after all, these two were associated with the most crowded and stirring months of Antonio's career, and he could hardly be cool at their irruption into the quiet life of the farm. Again, the affair of the azulejos had distracted him greatly; but surely God had been the substratum of his long thinkings, and the firmament overarching them all. As for Isabel, he was spending time with her at Sir Percy's express request. That he should find delight in her society was proper and right. As a da Rocha, whose ancestors had fought against the Moors to establish the Portuguese kingdom and against the Spaniards to restore it, he naturally felt invigorated by his encounters with a gently bred and high-born damsel.

Although he was perfectly honest in all this inward searching, the monk nevertheless failed to push the probe right home. Isabel had been confided to his neighbourly good-will, Isabel was intellectual, Isabel spoke his beloved English, Isabel was an aristocrat, like himself; therefore Isabel's temporary prominence in his thoughts was explained. It did not occur to him that Isabel was also the prettiest and daintiest girl he had ever seen, and that this fact might have some little to do with his interest in her. But he was not wholly

to blame for the omission. Barely ten days had passed since his escape from Margarida, and Antonio was taking it for fully granted that he was eternally proof against girls as girls and women as women.

When José came in from church the monk translated Mrs. Baxter's note aloud, and stated that he would accept the invitation. He added that he would take care to pass the chapel and, if possible, to collect the pieces of the two broken azulejos. The two men sat awhile in the garden, smoking their Sunday cigars and saying little. José's peace of mind was evidently not being disturbed by Sir Percy's daughter as it had been disturbed by Senhor Jorge's. After his master had refused a plump, bouncing rosy-cheeked, black-eyed heiress, all covered with gold, like Margarida, José did not fear his accepting a slender, icy, shell-pink, simply-garbed, unbejewelled stranger like Miss Kaye-Templeman. He would almost as soon have believed that Antonio was in danger of Mrs. Baxter.

The monk set out at three o'clock. Instead of taking his usual short cut up the bed of the torrent he followed the road through the great gates and the avenue of camellias to the monastery. He tried the door of the chapel; but it was locked. Deeply disappointed, he was turning away when Isabel came in sight, descending the steep path from the pool. She greeted him with more openness and friendliness than ever before.

'I've come to meet you,' she added, 'to save my own life. Whatever happens, don't let Mrs. Baxter know I wrote that little bit on her letter. She gave it to me to seal.'

'It was wrong of you,' said Antonio, with mock censoriousness.

'I know. Very wrong,' she retorted. 'But Mrs. Baxter began it. After her Mrs. B. and Signor R., surely there had to be a postscript. But tell me. Didn't I see you rattling the door of the chapel?'

'I hoped it might be unlocked,' he said, a little awkwardly, 'and I thought I might take the liberty of picking up those broken tiles. Perhaps they could be patched together and cemented back into their places.'

The thought of the azulejos clouded her gaiety, and she did not dissemble an impatient pout. Antonio drew out his old-fashioned silver watch.

'Twenty-five minutes past three,' he said. 'We are too early for Mrs. Baxter.'

'For Mrs. B., you mean,' she answered, dismissing her impatience. 'Very well, Signor R.; let us go and gather up the fragments.'

From her embroidered bag she drew out a tiny handkerchief, a set of ivory tablets, and, last of all, a long thin key. The monk recognised it at once. It was of old Spanish work, damascened; and Antonio could not doubt that if the Fazenda official had been a less ignorant man he would have ordered a cheap duplicate, so as to keep the original for himself. Isabel drove it into the keyhole; and, a moment later, the well-hung door rolled back on its hinges and the afternoon sun filled the chapel with warm light.

They entered. Nothing had been touched since the moment of Sir Percy's accident. Without a word the monk stepped forward and began putting together the broken framework of the saw. After some hesitation Isabel joined him. Kneeling near his side she sorted out the shattered azulejos and succeeded fairly well in piecing them together.'

'What shall we do with them?' she asked. 'We have no cement. Besides, I am not sure that my father won't prefer to put them back himself. By the way, don't tell Mrs. Baxter what we've been doing.'

'Give them to me,' Antonio answered. And, having transferred them to a short plank, he carried the pieces off to his own cell and placed them in the cupboard. The damage to the two tiles was irreparable; but he resolved to puzzle out the secret of their manufacture and to make new ones in their stead.

'We can go now, can't we?' begged Isabel, when he returned to the chapel. There was a dutiful, almost daughterly, submissiveness in her manner which cooed to his pride more softly and winsomely than he knew.

'We can go,' he said. 'There will be time to take the path over the stepping-stones.'

They relocked the chapel and mounted through the wood. Here and there its brown carpet of pine-needles was tawny with flecks and dapplings of mellow sunshine. In a patch of old garden, round an image of Saint Scholastica, they found autumn snowdrops, saffron, and sweet-smelling ranunculus. Overhead a blue gum-tree was in full flower, and all the while the wood hummed and thrilled with the diapason of the hidden torrent.

After they had crossed the stepping-stones Isabel halted, as if to absorb the loveliness of the rippling pool. Antonio remained silent, awaiting her good pleasure. Suddenly she said, without turning her eyes towards his:

'This is the place where I was so disagreeable yesterday morning.'

He was too much surprised to reply.

'Isn't it?' she demanded.

'No,' said Antonio. 'It is the place where, yesterday morning, we . . . where we didn't get on together as well as before.'

'It was all my fault,' she persisted. 'I had a silly fit of prudishness, like a young miss just home from school. All the time we were trying to talk I was wondering what you thought of me for asking you to meet me alone in a wood.'

'English ways are different from Portuguese,' suggested Antonio.

'Not so very different, after all,' she said. 'Ask Mrs. Baxter. Or, rather, take care that you don't say half a word to Mrs. Baxter about it. If you do she will swoon away with horror at the news of my brazen forwardness.'

'If you will lend me your little ivory tablets,' replied Antonio, 'I shall be able to begin making notes of all the things I am not to mention before Mrs. Baxter.'

'Be serious for a minute,' she urged, with a heightening of colour. 'Unless I can make you understand, we must not meet this way any more. If we mustn't, if we can't, I don't expect it will matter very much to you; but . . . it will to me.'

Her eyes met Antonio's. This time it was he who coloured up and fell into confusion. The only reply he could think of was a stilted compliment.

'The Senhorita does me a great and an undeserved honour,' he stammered.

'Don't,' she commanded, with an impatient gesture. 'When you talk like that I hate you. Be sincere. Besides, I'm not a Senhorita. If I were a Senhorita I should have jet-black hair and big sentimental eyes, and I should never walk more than a mile in my life, and I

should no more dream of meeting you like this than of dancing on a boa-constrictor. Are you going to talk like that any more? If so, we'll go home this minute and you can do it on the way.'

Antonio had met his match. If Isabel had been a man he could have met imperiousness with imperiousness, sarcasm with sarcasm, demand with demand, until he had established his will. But Isabel mastered him. He could only stand before her, like a refined and handsome José, awaiting orders.

'What you must understand is this,' she said. 'You have promised to come and talk to me now and then while my father is in Lisbon. You've promised, and I want you to do it. I must talk to somebody sometimes, mustn't I? But I'd rather not have you at all than have any more times like Friday afternoon with Mrs. Baxter. You may think that, because she finished the story of her life on Friday, you've got the worst of it over; but you haven't. You've still to hear about the dear Marchioness of Witheringfield. Mrs. Baxter didn't know the dear Marchioness from Eve; but the tale will take an hour, all the same. Also, you've to hear how Mrs. Baxter lost the Baxter jewels, which she never possessed; and how she undermined her health nursing me through a month's fever, though it was really only a two-days' cold in the head; and how she rescued the little Viscount Datton from a burning house which she never saw in her life. Don't think me spiteful. I simply can't stand it. Of course, you must put up with Mrs. Baxter once in a while; but, speaking generally, if you're coming any more to talk to me, I want you to talk to me here, at this pool, in the mornings.'

'If I come here, to this pool, in the mornings,' asked Antonio, who had recovered himself, 'how do you know that I shan't inflict on you a string of histories as long as Mrs. Baxter's?'

Although he did not mean to fish for a compliment, his ears expected some pleasing reply; and he was a little crestfallen when she replied brusquely:

'Perhaps you will. Only, don't you see, they will be histories I haven't heard fifty times already. Come to-morrow morning. Now we ought to be going. It must be close on four o'clock.'

III

The next morning Isabel and Antonio conversed, to the accompaniment of the cascade's deep music, for nearly an hour. The morning following, their talk lasted eighty minutes. On the Wednesday Antonio again drank tea with Mrs. Baxter, who regaled him with the full story of the little Viscount Datton's escape from the blaze at Datton Towers; of his lordship's ingratitude and eventual marriage; and of the young Viscountess Datton's scandalous callousness when her consort broke his collar-bone in a steeplechase. On the Friday morning the monk met Isabel again at the pool. Business took him to Villa Branca on the Saturday; but Sunday afternoon saw him striding over the stepping-stones once more.

Although these sunny hours were seasons of delight and refreshment to Antonio's human spirit, they did not parch the springs of his Christly life. Every night he continued the pious practice of self-examination, and he was able, in all honesty and reverence, to justify himself by the example of his Lord. *Diligebat Jesus Martham et sororem ejus Mariam*, 'Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary;' and, on the eve of His passion he fortified His weary spirit for the last conflict by abiding quietly in Martha's and Mary's house. And, in this sense—*diligebat* not *amabat*—Antonio loved Isabel. He was drawn to her by silken cords of pity for a loneliness and lovelessness far worse than his own. He

loved, with a fine spiritual sympathy unwarped by earthly passion, the brave, truthful, ardent soul underneath the ice of her pride. No doubt he found a sensuous pleasure in the softness of her voice, in her ever-varying beauty, and in her never-failing grace; but these charms delighted him by reason of an exquisite fitness, like the fitness of richly embroidered vestments and pure golden chalices or monstrances in great acts of spiritual worship. He loved her with a sacred and not with a profane love.

Nevertheless, the monk knew that he was only a weak mortal, and that he had drifted into a situation rife with perils. He remembered that better Christians than he had made shipwreck of their faith through yielding themselves too confidently to feminine companionship. He recalled the solemn warning of Saint Paul: 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' But, so far as his own safety was concerned, a single consideration sufficed to reassure him. In a few days Sir Percy would return, and it was almost certain that he would bid his women-folk pack their chattels and depart before the second instalment of purchase-money fell due. Within a month, perhaps within a week, Isabel would pass out of Antonio's life. Once more he would have to settle down with José to their dull and lonesome grind, and probably years would drag away before he could hear an English voice again.

Antonio, however, was not selfish enough to think only of his own salvation and perfection. The situation had its perils for Isabel as well as for himself; and therefore he followed up his monk's self-examination by meditating, as a man of the world, on Isabel's interests. Although he would miss her sorely, Antonio

was prepared to surrender her, when the time came, without a murmur, as he had learned to surrender many lesser delights before; but was Isabel equally able and willing to surrender Antonio? She was young, she was lonely, she was deeply affectionate as only a reserved woman can be; so was he doing right in occupying her thoughts more and more? After striving to act like the very soul of honour towards the slow-witted and shallow Margarida, was he not in danger of behaving dishonourably towards this finely-tempered, deep-hearted lady?

These questions suddenly pressed themselves upon his conscience with so much ardour as he was crossing the stepping-stones on the second Sunday afternoon that he halted in the midst of the spray from the cascade and almost resolved to turn back. But he decided that there was no cause for alarm. In Isabel's view the difference in their stations must surely repress any rash outgoings of her maiden fancy. The da Rochas could boast a longer and a less dubitable pedigree than the Kaye-Templemans; but Antonio had perceived among the English a disrespect for all aristocracies save their own. Besides, Isabel knew not a leaf or a twig of his family tree. To her he was a self-made man, a yeoman working with his own hands. Educated, travelled, interesting, ambitious, refined he might be; but, in the social scale, he was still a yeoman before the eyes of Isabel.

No. Surely there was no peril, no need to turn back. At not one of their meetings by the pool-side had there been the slightest approach to sentimental interchanges. They had talked of a hundred matters, Portuguese, English, and universal, and Isabel had gone so far as to tell a score or two of intimate experiences from which

Antonio could rebuild the grey history of her unpeaceful life. But there had been no more personal explanations, no more half-quarrels, no more uncontrolled glances or blushes, no more of anything outside the frank good-fellowship of fast friends in the first flush of friendship. So Antonio did not turn back.

Isabel appeared at last, holding out some papers. A post had arrived from Lisbon, bringing the news that Sir Percy was much better. As the burnt hand was still useless, Mr. Crowberry had written out the bulletin; and, enclosed with his letter to Isabel were two for Antonio. The first, from Crowberry *père*, contained little more than compliments and thanks; but the second, in the loose handwriting of Crowberry *fils*, was more interesting. It ran:

Dear Joligoodfellow.

IhopethiswillfindyouwellasitleavesmeatpresentthankGod forit.

Now that the alujezos (or ajuzelos, or azelujos) are safe, isn't it time you took a holiday? Why not come back to England with Sir Percy and Isabel? I don't expect they'll stay in Portugal.

I will bet a guinea that you've either quarrelled with Isabel or that you haven't. When you write, don't forget to say what you really think of her.

Give my love to that Excellent Creature Mrs. Baxter. Also to the Baxter jewels. Also to those monsters of ingratitude, inhumanity, and impiety Miss Sophia Baxter and the Viscount and Viscountess Datton. Also, if you dare, to Isabel. And accept the same yourself from

Your most respectful and obedient

TEDDY CROWBERRY.

It occurred to Antonio that in neither of the letters was a date given for Sir Percy's return to the guest-house. He was on the point of asking Isabel whether it was mentioned in Mr. Crowberry's bulletin; but he saw that the question could be interpreted in an uncouth sense, and therefore he did not put it. The answer, however, was writ plain in Isabel's face. He swiftly analysed her cheerfulness into two principal components —her thankfulness for Sir Percy's improved health and her relief at the prolongation of her liberty. Isabel's laugh was more free and gay. She seemed to be more of a girl and less of a woman. Indeed, for a few minutes, she became almost a child. For a while she stood hurling stones into the heart of the waterfall, as into the white down and iridescent feathers of a great bird's breast; and as soon as she wearied of this exercise she began to sail boats of cork-bark down the hurrying waters of the pool, scolding or encouraging her favourite as if it had been alive.

When Isabel at last sat down she demanded, with her usual abruptness:

'Why have you never told me about the Portuguese ladies—about the senhoritas? I'm tired of Dom Miguel and Dom Pedro, and Affonso Henriques and the Cardinal-King. As for growing grapes, by this time I know as much about it as you do. Talk to me about the senhoritas.'

'What can I say about them,' objected Antonio, 'except that they are exceedingly beautiful, exceedingly virtuous, and exceedingly charming.'

'And exceedingly dull,' she said. 'But be serious. Answer me. Is it true that Portuguese men are only half Christians? Is it true that, where women are con-

cerned, you are out-and-out Moors? Don't you all look on women either as toys or as slaves?'

'If young Mr. Crowberry were here,' retorted Antonio, 'he would tell you how we tie up the ladies of our harems in sacks and drop them into the Tagus.'

'I'm glad young Mr. Crowberry is hundreds of miles away,' she declared. 'When I've the patience to listen to him, I admit some of his satire is clever. But he bores me. I mean, he annoys me. I suppose it's because we've both got yellow hair.'

'You have not got yellow hair,' said Antonio.

'Never mind what sort of hair I've got. Tell me about the senhoritas. How do they spend their time?'

'Perhaps they could answer themselves—though I doubt it,' he said. 'People say they eat and drink and sleep; they dress and go to church; and, the rest of the time, they look out of the window.'

'Is it still true,' she asked, 'that their . . . their suitors come and stand under the windows at night, for hours at a time, with guitars?'

'Not always with guitars,' explained Antonio, 'but the rest is still true. If you want a senhorita you must stand under her window, night after night, for months, wet or fine. When her window is on the third floor you get a crick in the neck.'

'But what do they talk about?'

'Nothing. They make eyes.'

Her questions ceased, and the monk hoped that they were finished with a risky topic. Suddenly, however, she turned upon him and blurted out:

'Do you have to crick your neck for Margarida?'

Antonio jumped. The question struck him entirely dumb. Margarida! At first he could only stare at the

questioner blankly. Then his stung pride made itself felt. The blank stare gave place to a flash of indignation. Her eyes quailed before the angry fires in his.

'No,' he said, slowly and coldly. 'I do not have to crick my neck for Margarida.'

Isabel's face shewed that she was troubled and almost frightened at what she had done. But he made no haste to condone her offence. He was capable of forgiving the injury almost as soon as it was committed; but he could not so easily surmount his disappointment at hearing anything like indelicacy from her lips. Graver still was this sudden revelation that Isabel did, after all, think thoughts of him as a lover and a marrying man. And it gradually dawned upon him that there had been something nervous in her gaiety from the moment of her bringing the Crowberrys' letters. He understood at last that she had come determined to probe him with her sudden question.

He got up and moved away a few yards to a point from which he could see the Atlantic; and there he stood, taking scrupulous counsel with himself. Was it or was it not his duty to make a fresh draft upon the candour with which he had ended the match-making of Senhor Jorge? No. It was not. Yet something had to be done. What hint ought he to drop, or what counter-stroke ought he to deliver? For one foolish half-moment he almost entertained a mean plan of letting Isabel believe that there was indeed something between himself and Margarida.

'I am so sorry,' murmured a soft and penitent voice almost in his ear.

After long indecision he asked, in dry tones and without turning to look at her:

'What made you say it?'

Her pause was longer than his. At length she answered:

'It wasn't idle curiosity.'

'Then what was it?'

'I hardly know. Only it . . . it seemed so dreadful.'

'Dreadful?'

'I mean,' she explained hastily, 'it would be dreadful if you made a marriage like that. To say so is unpardonable impertinence on my part, no doubt. But, to be perfectly frank, I . . . well, I suppose I've idealised you a little. You're not like other people I've met. And it shocked me to think of you settling down and, so to speak, giving up the fight.'

'What fight?' asked the monk, not willing to help her out.

'Fight is the wrong word. Never mind. You know what I mean. Of course, this Margarida is good and domesticated and she'll make some farmer or tradesman an excellent wife. But can she read or write? Has she more than three ideas in her head? Could she talk with you, or understand you, or even sympathise with you, in anything that matters?'

'I suppose she could,' said Antonio. 'The simple things of life are the things that matter.'

"To simple people, certainly. But you are not simple. You are complicated. Your teeth are easily set on edge. You are sentimental, romantic.'

'I am sentimental? I am romantic?' he echoed, with an unfree incredulous laugh. 'You are the first to find it out.'

'It's true, all the same. What about that shut-up dismal monastery down there? Haven't you woven

more romance around it than any ladye ever wove around her dead knight? What about the azulejos? Aren't you as sentimental over them as any love-sick youth over a withered rose or a lock of hair? Why, you were ready to quarrel with us all, your old friends included, for the sake of a sentimental memory.'

'Tell me,' the monk demanded, turning to read her eyes, 'what do you know about Margarida? What have you heard? Who has been talking to you?'

She was silent.

'From whom have you heard Margarida's name?' he insisted.

'You will think very badly of me,' she confessed. 'I heard it from Fisher, my maid. Oh, yes! look scandalised by all means. I don't care. The poor girl is in exile. Joanninha, our Portuguese cook, doesn't know much English, and she's old enough to be Fisher's mother. Mrs. Baxter never speaks to Fisher except to scold her or order her about. If I didn't let her chatter now and again to me, she'd go mad. Not that I listen to half she says; but I should be telling you a downright lie if I pretended that I didn't prick up my ears when she began about you and Margarida.'

'What did she say?'

'Very little. Only that Joanninha had been gossiping in the village shop, and that somebody had said something about the Senhor Oliveira da Rocha marrying this Margarida.'

Antonio relapsed into moody silence. The news that his name was still being linked with Margarida's filled him with chagrin, if only for the sake of Senhor Jorge and his family. When, however, his thoughts came back to Isabel he softened. He saw no reason for

doubting that she was disinterested in dreading the disaster of his union with an unlettered and unintelligent country lass, and he was unconsciously flattered by her generous recognition of his finer temperament. Isabel, waiting at his elbow like a repentant child, felt the softening; and, plucking up fresh courage, she said:

'You haven't told me yet if it is true. You've only told me that you don't crick your neck.'

'Which do you think?' asked the monk rather sharply. 'Do you believe this gossip or not?'

'I don't,' she replied, without hesitation. 'But . . . there's just one thing that might make me credit it.'

'What is it?'

'Well. This Margarida is certainly very pretty. She has an adorable colour and wonderful eyes, and she wears her mantilla beautifully. Besides——'

'But you've never seen her,' interrupted Antonio in alarm.

'Yes, I have. This morning. In church. At Mass. Why weren't you there? I thought you were obliged to go. I went with Joanninha. Don't ask me to say that I liked it. The gilded wood and the crude colours hurt my eyes, and the music was fearful. I couldn't understand a word of the sermon and I didn't know what they were doing at the altar, so I had to pass the time looking at Margarida. If I were a man, I could fall in love with her.'

'You went to church?' repeated Antonio, bewildered. Throughout their many talks during the week he had avoided the subject of religion. He had seen that it ruffled her, and he preferred not to discuss it until they knew one another's first principles and prejudices in less weighty matters. But he had not once failed, night

or morning, to commend the work of Isabel's conversion to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, or to pray that he might become the instrument of the Holy Ghost therein.

'Why did you go?' he asked. 'To look at Margarida?'

'Most decidedly not,' she retorted with spirit. 'I didn't know who the pretty girl in the mantilla was till I came home. Fisher only told me this gossip two hours ago.'

'Then you went to church to see what it was like?' he persisted, hoping, nevertheless, that there was some better reason.

'I went because I wanted to,' she answered. 'But come back to the point. Is it true about Margarida?'

He had gradually become aware of a new sympathy between them. All the resentment and distrust faded out of his heart. His gaze sought hers; and not until he could look down into her eyes did he answer:

'It is not true. It never was. It never will be.'

The last syllable had hardly sped clear of his lips when the monk was struck dumb by the truth. It flashed from Isabel's radiant eyes like a flaming sword into his heart. A moment later she had turned away her face; but she could not hide the magic roses, the great crimson roses, which sprang to full bloom upon her cheeks. He knew her secret; and she knew that it was known.

To cover her trouble and confusion, she moved to find her little gloves and the embroidered bag. Antonio stooped down before her and was the first to pick them up; but she snatched them almost roughly out of his hand.

'We've stayed too long,' she said. 'I must go.'

In a twinkling she had crossed the stepping-stones and was in full flight for home. No wood-nymph pursued by a god of old ever flew with more gazelle-like grace; and the ravine seemed shorn of nearly all its beauty when the trees hid her from Antonio's eyes.

IV

On Monday morning, although he had business i
Navares, Antonio was early at the pool. Throughout
sleepless night his moods had wavered from bitte
self-reproach to laborious self-justification. But, amids
all the waverings, one decision stood firm. He must se
Isabel at once. He must not run away. He must no
tolerate, either on his part or on hers, any spuriou
delicacy, any eluding of a thorough understanding.

Try as he would Antonio could not wholly close hi
eyes to the grim humour of the situation. Within th
narrow space of three weeks two young and handsom
heiresses had thrown themselves at his, a monk of Sain
Benedict's, head. But, while this oddity brought
bitter smile to his lips, he was not able to take pleasur
or pride in events which were bringing pain and humilia
tion to others. The feeling uppermost in his heart wa
one of shame and sorrow for his indiscretion and weak
ness in meeting Isabel so secretly and so often.

About half-past ten she came, looking pale and rathe
frail. But she had nerved herself for the ordeal befor
her, and she was calm and self-controlled.

'I knew you would come,' she said quietly. 'Yet
feared you wouldn't. Early this morning I nearly sen
Jackson down to the farm with a note; but I didn'
want people to talk.'

'I came nearly an hour ago,' the monk replied. Hi

tones were so grave and his manner so solemn that a flush of resentment rose to her cheek.

'Don't make things worse than they are,' she cried angrily. 'Aren't they difficult enough already? You won't help matters by looking and speaking as if you've come to a funeral.'

Antonio could not retort that he was indeed standing by a graveside and that he had come to drop a farewell tear upon their dead happiness. He waited for her next words.

'We're obliged to talk out our talk whether we like it or not,' she continued, turning her back upon him and tearing at the fronds of a young mimosa. 'I'm not an actress. I can't pretend that I don't know what we both know perfectly well. You can; but I can't. If I left it all to you, I suppose you'd tell me some more about the Emperor Pedro, or about sea-sand grapes. You'd be perfectly polite and, as you imagine, perfectly considerate; and you'd go back to the farm at twelve o'clock.'

'I came here,' answered Antonio, 'expressly to talk and to listen without a moment's false delicacy or a shade of pretence.'

'Thank you,' she said, with a tinge of irony.

Her slender white fingers were still wantonly busy with the mimosa. The monk racked his wits desperately for an opening sentence. He would have preferred the easier task of facing Senhor Jorge and Donna Perpetua and Sir Percy and Mrs. Baxter and the Visconde de Ponte Quebrada and Queen Victoria's Comptroller and the Fazenda official all combined. Words refused to come. But it fell out that his dumbness was all for the best.

'Listen,' said Isabel, without turning round. 'You don't expect me to find this interview very delightful, do you? You'll admit that it's easier for me to talk about usurpers and bunches of grapes than about . . . than about all this. I'll tell you what I've done. Perhaps I've done wrong, as usual; but I can't help it. I'm going to give you a letter—I mean a paper, a scribble. Some things are so much easier to write than to say. After I've given it to you I'm going away for a walk. I shall come back in half an hour. You may open my little bag. It is in there.'

Antonio loosened the cords of the silken pouch with respectful hands. It contained the damascened key of the chapel, a tiny lump of shining felspar picked up from the path, a pair of fine gloves, two or three small coins, and a folded paper. As he drew the paper forth, a snapping of twigs made him look up. Isabel was breaking her way through the trees.

His hand trembled as he unfolded the document. It was a quarto sheet filled from top to bottom with Isabel's fine writing. The monk glanced down the hill to make sure that she had come to no harm; and as soon as he caught sight of her walking quickly along one of the woodland paths, he sat down on a warm boulder and began to read these lines:

Four years ago you and Mr. Austin Crowberry visited the Earl of Oakland. You dined at Castle Oakland, and stayed all the next day.

The Countess of Oakland is my aunt. I hardly ever see her, because my father quarrelled with the Earl nearly twenty years ago. But the Earl has a niece, Lady Julia Blighe, whom I met in London a few days after you went

away. Perhaps you remember her. She is a little over-magnificent, and wears too much jewellery at once; but people go mad over her, and some say she is the most beautiful woman in England.

You made a most extraordinary impression on Lady Julia. She admitted giving you a flower. I grew tired of hearing about you—nearly bored to death. At first she caused me to picture you as a beautiful Byronic hero, with a Great Grief or a Dark Secret; and I detest all that sort of trash and gush. But one day, while she was chattering, a miracle happened. I can't describe it. Perhaps it was like someone throwing wide a door that had always been shut, or setting free a bird or animal that had always been caged. All in one moment you became the most important fact in the world. Why? How? I don't know. I thought I knew you through and through. Often I could have said to Lady Julia: 'No. That's all wrong. You know nothing about him.'

I can't explain it. I am simply telling you the fact. From that time you haunted me. I became absolutely certain that our lives, some day, would meet; more certain than I am of the sun's existence and the moon's. When Mr. Crowberry told me of the plan for buying this place, and my becoming your neighbour out in these wilds, I ought to have been overwhelmed by the astonishing co-incidence; but it seemed as natural and inevitable as the sunrise.

At the first moment—no, not the first—I mean, the second moment of our meeting at your farm, I was mortified because you tried to look at me before I could look at you. Why did you do it? It was unkind. I had been thinking of you for four years; but you, if you thought of me at all, couldn't have thought of me more than four days.

Yet, although you were in such a hurry to beat off my eyes, I saw in an instant that you were exactly as I had imagined you. Oporto and the Douro were not in the least like the engravings they shewed me in England: but you were my dream come true. And all the time I sat on your right hand at dinner, I felt as if I had known you for years and years. You are not as clever as I expected; but you are gentle, and I am not one bit afraid of you.

We nearly quarrelled about monks and about the azulejos, did we not? Still, it was only on the surface. You think I make too little of religion; I think you make too much: but we have agreed quite amicably to differ. Deep down in our hearts we are at one.

Since the day my father went to Lisbon I have been happy, for the first time in my life. You left me to make all the approaches; but I was very, very happy until Fisher mentioned Margarida. Last night I ached and burned with shame, because I had let fall the veil from my heart. But this morning I am glad and thankful.

You are not like other men. And I think I am not wholly like other women. As soon as you have read this paper we are going to tear it into thousands of pieces. So I will be bold. Mine is not the only secret that is out. I know you love me, my friend, my only friend in the world.

Antonio paused in his reading. For a moment he felt an immense relief at learning that he was not to blame. But he reminded himself that his blamelessness did not help Isabel one whit. Here was a mystical passion, an inscrutable supernatural love. No one could explain its beginning, no one could foretell its end. Only by a great effort did he resume the reading of the paper. It continued:

So much for the past. Now for the present and the future. What are we to do? Don't be hurt, dearest friend, if I write bluntly about practical matters.

There is a difference in our stations. I suspect that your blood is really nobler than mine and that your escutcheon is less tarnished; but, from the point of view of my friends, this will be a misalliance. Don't be angry. I mention it only to bid you disregard it. I have pondered it well and it weighs less than a sparrow's feather. I am nothing to the people in England; and they shall be nothing to me. Tell me, though; was it this that held you back from wooing me? I believe it was; and that is why the advances came from my side. But, after this, remember! You must court me, woo me. If I command it, you must crick your neck for me, as if I were a Senhorita.

And now about my father. You may fear that it will be a blow to him. Certainly it will amaze him and disconcert him. But if you were not in the case, my friend, I should have to amaze him and disconcert him some other way. So long as I and Mrs. Baxter and Jackson are with him, he doesn't realise the flight of time. He thinks of me as a little girl, and of himself as a man of forty who must needs be up and doing. He has fought his hard fight and he deserves his rest. More. He needs it. The Navares doctor says he will go out like a candle in a gale if he does not surrender. Whatever you may think, I love my father; and, even for your sake, I would not leave his side if it were not wholly for his good. God knows I am honest in this and in every word I have written.

ISABEL.

Mechanically refolding the sheet, Antonio rose to his

feet and drew a deep breath. In a few minutes Isabel would return. She would steal as shyly as a young deer through the branches. She would expect him to spring towards her, to clasp her in his arms, to murmur proud words of possession, to lavish in her ears his long-hoarded treasure of love-words, to press kisses on her hands, her cheeks, her eyes, her hair. Like a terrifying tocsin her words clanged in his brain: 'My friend, my only friend in the world, you love me!'

He turned his gaze towards the Atlantic. But the day was growing sultry. Thunder was in the air and mists hid the great waters. He dared not look into the woods lest he should espy the slender figure tripping towards him. And somehow he could not lift up his eyes and his heart to heaven. In this cruel issue his inborn instincts of a courtly gentleman wore down his acquired habits of piety, until it savoured of a coarseness or of a lapse from honour to breathe a word of this rare ladye's secret, even into the pitiful ears of God's saints and angels. Thus earth and sea and sky alike failed him. He closed his eyes.

Suddenly a rosy light and a delicious perfumed warmth seemed to suffuse his body and soul. Of course. His way was plain. God had frozen his cry for help upon his lips because it was no longer God's will that he should mortify his manhood in dogged fidelity to obsolete vows. He had vowed his vows in the belief that the Order would continue, and that he would live and die in its midst, upheld by its hourly discipline and devotion. He had not left the Order: the Order had left him. For seven years he had laboured to restore it, and he had failed. He was free.

Free. Free to be as other men, free to hail the most

wonderful and beautiful of maidens, free to exult over her, free to receive her marvellous love and to give it back a thousand-fold. He opened his eyes, and involuntarily held out his arms.

With bent head Isabel was picking her way up the slope. Her exquisite hands held her pretty dress of sprigged muslin clear of the thorny undergrowth. Sunbeams played with her golden ringlets. Antonio watched her with a sense of intoxication. This lovely girl was his, body and spirit, all his.

She drew nearer until he could see the blue of her large eyes, the peach-bloom of her soft cheeks. Then, with the suddenness of an earthquake, the greatest miracle of his life befell.

Hundreds of times in the past, especially at seasons of abounding faith and high ecstasy, he had prayed that the Blessed Virgin would fly to his relief if ever he should weaken in this most perilous of his vows. 'Pray for me, O Mother of mothers, O Virgin of virgins'! he had cried again and again. 'Pray for me whenever I cannot, or will not, pray for myself.' And, as Isabel parted the branches behind the mimosa, those hundreds of old prayers were answered. Celestial fire and supernal power filled his whole being so suddenly and mightily that he was conscious of a physical pang, of a roaring in his ears like rushing winds and resounding waters, of a great brightness before his eyes.

He stepped forward and held back the last bough.

V

The heat of conflict and the flush of victory had wrought so great a change in Antonio's expression that Isabel started when they came face to face. But she interpreted his transfiguration as an ecstasy of love and joy; and her blue eyes suddenly shone with a radiance as wonderful as his own.

Before her proud and happy gaze Antonio's cheeks grew pale. It was as if a pet lamb were looking up to him for a caress, when all the time he was gripping a butcher's knife behind his back. It was as if some smiling friend were holding out to him an exquisite vase full of lilies and roses which he must straightway dash into pieces. Isabel seemed so frail, so soft, so white, so trustful, so lamb-like; and her love was surely the most fragrant and beautiful thing in all the world.

'You are coy,' she said, laughing gaily. 'And you have turned as pale as a swooning heroine in an English novel. I suppose you're going to say, "Give me time: this is so sudden!"'

Although Antonio remained silent, no doubt of his love crossed her mind. Had she not read love in his eyes, time after time? She took it for granted that he was merely tongue-tied because of the strangeness of the situation.

'You have read it?' she asked, drawing the folded paper from his unresisting hand. 'Every word?'

He bowed assent. For a minute or two her slender fingers busied themselves tearing the document first into ribbons, then into small squares, and finally into tiny shreds. After she had mixed the shreds well together she ran to the lower end of the pool and threw them, one small handful at a time, into the swirling rapids.

'You are tired,' said Antonio when she returned. 'The day is sultry. Later on there will be thunder. You have walked a long way. You must sit down.'

Isabel seated herself on the flat boulder. But although there was room at her side the monk remained standing. She pouted unconsciously and darted two furtive glances at his eyes. The first glance was only a glance of slight disappointment and of shy reproof; but the second was a glance of sudden anguish and sickening fear. The silence lengthened until she could bear it no longer.

'Speak to me!' she commanded indignantly. 'Why do you stand there saying nothing? I suppose you despise me?'

'Isabel,' he said, calling her by her name for the first time, 'you know I don't despise you.'

He spoke her name in a voice so strangely sweet that her ears tingled and her heart leapt. And when his brown velvet eyes looked into hers with sorrowful tenderness all her pride broke down.

'Then why are you so cruel?' she cried. 'Why do you make it so hard for me? Haven't I humiliated myself enough? You are cruel. Why do you not tell me that you love me?'

The supernal grace and might which had miraculously fulfilled Antonio's body and soul enabled him to triumph

over temptation; but they did not deliver him from anguish. The sword which was about to rend the heart of Isabel scorched him as it circled downward for its dreadful work. Her coming ordeal was already his; and he stood in the midst of it as in a burning fiery furnace.

Isabel sprang up and faced him. Their eyes were less than a yard apart. Antonio's continued silence was sufficient answer; but she fought fiercely against the truth. Clasping her white hands deperately against her breast, she challenged him in short, panting sentences.

'This is horrible, too horrible,' she began, 'I tell you it is too horrible. You can't, you daren't look me in the eyes and say you don't love me!' And when he still delayed to speak she raised her voice and commanded sharply: 'Answer!'

He looked her in the eyes with immeasurable sadness, and answered:

'I do not love you in the way you mean.'

'The way I mean? What is the way I mean? Either you love me or you don't. There are no two ways in love.' She spoke hotly and with scorn.

'In the paper you've just torn up,' he replied, 'you called me your dearest friend in the world. In that sense, I love you. In all the world, you are my dearest friend.'

'And no more? Not an atom more?'

He hesitated.

'Come,' she said bitterly. 'You are trying me too far. If this is some subtlety, some finesse, let us save it until another day. For the last time, I ask you: Can you stand up here in the sight of the God you

believe in, and say that I am no more to you than your dearest friend?'

It came home to Antonio that he could not, with perfect truthfulness, say that she was his friend and no more. Yet how was he to evade her question? Plainly the cruel, hateful moment had come for striking the fair vase to pieces, for driving the butcher's knife into the white lamb's heart. He raised his head and resumed the mastery over her by a single movement of his inextinguishable will.

'My dearest friend in the world,' he said gently. 'If I am to blame for the smallest fraction of this wonderful and terrible thing which has come to pass, I crave your pardon here and now with all my heart, and I will ask God's pardon every day until I die. But . . . for God's sake, let us forget. Let yesterday and to-day be as if they had never been. How a woman like you could ever waste one thought of love on a man like me neither of us can explain.'

She heard him with wildly staring eyes.

'You offer me,' he concluded, 'a gift beyond all price. But I must turn my back, I must close my eyes, I must stop my ears. I am pledged to another Bride.'

They were the words he had used to Senhor Jorge. But, this time, he uttered them proudly; for he had meditated upon them often since the serão. He knew that they were not a mean verbal quibble, and that they enshrined the foremost fact of his life. As they left his lips the spiritual world was as real and near as the cascade, as real and near as the mossy boulder, as real and near as Isabel.

His delicacy moved the monk to turn away without even the briefest glance at the effect of his declaration

upon Isabel. But she did not desire his consideration. Something magnetic in her anger compelled him to raise his eyes. He saw that she too had moved away.

'Another Bride?' she repeated slowly, barbing every syllable with scorn. 'Another Bride? Indeed. What an entirely enviable young woman!'

For a few moments her sarcasm sustained her. With her hands hanging easily at her side she stood haughtily erect, smiling a scornful smile. But it did not last. Without warning she ran towards him and cried, with a break in her voice:

'It isn't true!'

'It is true,' said the monk, very gently.

'It is not true!' she went on, stamping her foot. 'It isn't. It can't be. If it were true you would have told me before. You'd have dropped a hint, you'd have talked about her. I tell you, it isn't true. If it were true you'd have told me when you denied the talk about Margarida. You are a man. You are not a cur and a brute.'

'This is unjust,' cried Antonio. 'How could I tell you yesterday, after Margarida? You ran away home like the wind. And why should I drop hints? Surely they would have been a great impertinence. How should I dream that you, an English lady, with a proud old name, would ever think so of me, a wine-merchant's clerk?'

'Then why did you make love to me fifty times?' she retorted.

'Fifty times? Made love? This is madness. On my honour and conscience I have not breathed a word of love to you even once.'

'Who said you'd breathed words? I didn't. But

you've made love with your eyes. Over and over and over again you have looked at me as if I was as much to you as you were to me, and as if you and I were the only beings in the world.'

'I swear you are mistaken, utterly mistaken,' cried Antonio.

Isabel had ceased to listen. She clenched her hands together once more against her breast and stood gazing towards the mists which hid the Atlantic. When she spoke again it was not to Antonio. She seemed rather to be thinking aloud, with quick impassioned utterance.

'So this is the end,' she began. 'Yet how long it has been in coming! I have been happy for ten days—ten whole days. When was I ever happy for three days and nights before? But it's over now. What a memory to carry to my grave—the memory of this end! I've made a fool of myself. I've made myself cheaper than dirt. I've pressed myself on a man who won't have me.'

Antonio took a step forward; but, without paying him the smallest attention, she continued:

'It's happened to other women, no doubt. But the other women weren't so hungry and thirsty for a little happiness as I was. They didn't have mothers who died the day they were born. They didn't have fathers who forget their very existence for months and months at a time. They've had homes, they've had friends, they've had all the lesser love. But I . . . I have had nothing, from anybody, anywhere, ever.'

She laughed a laugh like iron against iron. The monk could endure it no longer. He sprang to her side. For the first time, he touched her hand. She snatched it free as if he had burnt it, and looked at him fiercely.

'Go away,' she cried, 'I hate you!'

'No,' he said. 'I won't go away till you are less unhappy, and till you forgive me.'

His gentle compulsion mastered her. She allowed him to lead her back to the boulder. This time he sat down at her side. As he did so she bent her head. Tears came into her eyes. Suddenly she covered her face with her hands and wept without restraint.

Antonio, sitting so near to her that he could have encircled her with his arm, suffered as bitterly as Isabel. The momentary temptation to trample on his vow no longer had the slightest power over him; but his whole heart yearned to end her grief or, at the least, to comfort her. She was so like a sobbing, heartbroken child that it seemed inhuman to sit beside her without drawing her head to his shoulder or even stroking her hands. Yet he knew that it would be more inhuman still to rise up and move away.

She overcame her sobs at last; and, turning upon him eyes like April skies, she demanded abruptly:

'This Bride? What is she like?'

'Let us not talk of her now,' said Antonio, as soon as he could command his words. 'Surely it is better not.'

'Is she like Margarida?'

'No.'

'Prettier?'

'For Heaven's sake,' he pleaded, 'do not ask these questions?'

'Answer me at once. Is she prettier than I am? In England they call me pretty. I suppose I'm ugly to a Portuguese. I suppose she's a hundred times more beautiful than I am.'

'There are different kinds of beauty,' said Antonio.

'Is she clever?'

Antonio considered well. Then he replied:

'In Her case I should not use the word "clever." But, I entreat you, ask me no more.'

He rose to his feet with a look which silenced her. A moment afterwards she too sprang up. Stepping quickly to the pool, she dipped her little handkerchief in the laughing water and tried to bathe away the traces of her tears. When she sailed back towards him she came proudly.

'This ought to be the end,' she said. 'I ought not to see you alone again. But I don't forbid you to come just once more. Perhaps I shall be here to-morrow morning. I don't say I shall, and I don't say I shan't.'

Her steady gaze commanded an answer: but it was only by a huge effort that Antonio succeeded in replying:

'You have spoken truly. We ought not to meet alone again.'

'No, we ought not. Most decidedly we ought not,' she flashed back scornfully. 'But we will!'

And without another word or glance she hastened away.

VI

Isabel could not sleep. In order to postpone the hour of solitude she had sat up late talking to Fisher, practising Portuguese with Jacarandina, and writing letters to her few friends in England. Finally she had astounded Mrs. Baxter by asking to be told all about the early life of the callous young Viscountess Datton and by listening without a murmur to the details which the Excellent Creature multitudinously invented. But the moment came when Mrs. Baxter's love of bed overbore her love of hearing herself talk. She rang the bell and Jackson came in, yawning, with the candles.

When Isabel lay down she set the whole power of her will to the barricading of her mind against the day's cruel memories. But it was all in vain. Every word she had spoken to Antonio, every syllable of his replies, vibrated afresh in her ears, scorching them with shame. Twice or thrice she clenched her fist as if she would strike some invisible enemy or revenge herself on the author of her loss and humiliation. Sometimes her cheeks burned crimson: sometimes she felt all the blood ebb from them. Her spiritual anguish brought in its wake a physical pain, sickening and hardly bearable, like the pains after the first shock of a dizzy fall or a brutal blow. She seemed to be aching all over; and more than once she moaned aloud.

Even without her shame and grief Isabel could hardly

have slept. All through the afternoon and evening the air had been growing sultrier and sultrier. Not once in England, not even during brazen August, had she known such a stifling heat. Both her windows stood wide open; but they seemed to be admitting fiery vapours rather than life-giving airs. Even the fine linen sheet was too hot and heavy to be endured. She flung it aside and lay with nothing to cover her save a plain night-robe of the thinnest Indian silk. At first she tossed from side to side; but so much exertion soon exhausted her, and she lay still, gasping for breath.

At length the heat became unendurable. She rose and went to the window. Two or three miles away, over the woods, over the abbey, beyond Antonio's farm, the surly Atlantic was growling his muffled growl through the sultry air. Quite near at hand the shrunken torrent was rumbling down through the underwoods. Isabel listened. The airy ocean and the seaward-hurrying brook seemed to invite her, and to be beckoning her with cool hands. She leaned out, fain to be a little nearer.

There was no moon, and the stars could not pierce the stagnant clouds. Yet the night was not solidly dark. The outlines of the taller trees could be traced against the sky, and the pavement which surrounded the guest-house glimmered like white limestone.

Isabel was suddenly filled with an overmastering desire to break her prison walls and to walk free under the open sky. Apart from its bitter associations she would have lacked courage to visit the pool and the cascade in the dead of night; for the narrow path thither wound in and out of sombre thickets. But the broad way, broad enough for a carriage, which ran

down from the guest-house to the abbey, and thence, through the avenue of camellias, to the principal gate had no terrors for a soul almost untroubled by superstitious fears. It seemed to the half-stifled heart-sick Isabel that if she could escape from the house unheard by Jackson and Mrs. Baxter she might find life and healing in those ampler spaces. She did not admit to herself that the broad path and, especially, the paved space in front of the abbey attracted her because they were rich in unembittered memories of hours with Antonio. Room, more room; air, more air: she thought she wanted nothing besides.

Having dressed herself swiftly in her lightest garments she threw over her hair a black lace mantilla which she had bought in Oporto, thrust her shoes and stockings into her little bag and crept barefoot to the door. It creaked a little when she closed it behind her; but the steady sequence of sounds which continued to come from the bedroom of Mrs. Baxter proved that the Excellent Creature had heard nothing. Isabel turned away with a shrug of distaste, and descended the stairs. There was no need to listen for the snoring of Jackson, who could have gone on sleeping restfully if she had clattered about the corridor in clogs.

The two bolts of the front door were not very hard to draw back, and the latch was easily lifted. On the top step, where she had talked thrice with Antonio, Isabel drew on her stockings and shoes. Then she closed the door behind her, latched it softly, and stole on tiptoe out of earshot down the path.

It was not much cooler in the open than in her chamber. Still, she was glad that she had exchanged her narrow cell for freedom. Besides, the far-stretching woods

and the vast heavens were more in scale with her immeasurable sorrow. She walked on quickly, eager to hasten away from her hateful prison. The path was cheerful because it led down to the open lowlands and the refreshing sea.

Midnight, to Isabel's mind, usually held no more terrors than noonday. But when a vague shape confronted her under a tree she started violently. Some gossip of Joanninha's awoke in her memory—some ridiculous village story about a ghostly monk who haunted the domain on dark nights. Advancing boldly upon it she found that the vague shape was only a dead trunk clothed in creepers. She tried to laugh; but the laugh would not come, and suddenly she knew what was meant by fear.

Her instinct was to turn and run home. But the path behind her, backed by the enormous mass of the mountain, looked like a tunnel bored through coal, while the path ahead of her led towards Antonio and José, towards the soft lights and faint voices of the sea. Daring neither to go back nor to stand still, she hurried on until her foot struck a slab of stone.

She had reached the paved space in front of the abbey. The western gable of the chapel hulked up high into the gloom, like the poop of a man-o'-war aground. Upon the warm stone steps, with her back to the door, she sat down until she had regained all her breath and lost nearly all her fears. Isabel saw no reason why she should not sit there until the dawn. She hid her face in her hands, and tried to sleep.

A growling in the east aroused her. It was no louder than the Atlantic's growling in the west. Isabel knew that it was thunder; but it seemed to be so far away

that she was not alarmed. What surprised her was its long protraction. Unlike the intermittent din of an English thunderstorm it rumbled on unceasingly, until Isabel could almost have believed that she was listening to the echoes of an Armageddon raging among the burnt, far-off hills of Spain. Suddenly, however, a blaze of lightning shewed her the terrified Atlantic's ashen face. She had never dreamed of such lightning before. Flash trod upon flash so eagerly that there was a continuous dance of light. The half-seconds of dimness between seemed more positive than the lightning. They were like the convulsive twitchings of a great eyelid over a terrible eye; and Isabel thought she saw flashes of darkness rather than flashes of light.

From the neighbourhood of the stepping-stones came a shattering noise, as sharp as a pistol-shot and as loud as an exploding magazine. Immediately afterwards, as if obeying a preconcerted signal, a fearful cannonading and fusillading began to rage on every hand. Armageddon had swept westward.

Isabel sprang up and huddled back into the scanty shelter of the shallow doorway. So long as there was no rain she welcomed the gigantic grandeur of the thunder and the cold, pitiless beauty of the lightning. But the rain's herald did not delay to blow his blast. Isabel could not see them; but she felt a swirl of dust and dead leaves rush past her in obedience to his command. Gritty atoms clung to her lips. At the same moment ten thousand trees began to rock and moan in pain; and a warm drop fell upon Isabel's hand.

Down rushed the rain. At first it struck straight down from heaven, but, after a few seconds, it smote

the wood slantwise, like millions of thin javelins hurled from a height. The thunder never ceased crackling, banging, booming; and the lightnings were so bright that the tree-trunks stood like smoke-blackened men wielding brilliant scimitars amidst the flying javelins.

Isabel was greedily watching the strife when the wind veered, and a battery of rain discharged its whole broadside full at her face. The gust lasted only a moment; but, when it had passed, her thin dinner-dress was wet all over. She knew that there would be fifty gusts all as bad as the first or worse, and that she must either enter the chapel or be drenched to the skin.

She drew the key from her bag. The lightnings served her for a lantern as she drove the steel into the keyhole; but before she could turn it in the lock another burst of cold rain smacked rudely at her bare shoulders. At length she pushed back the door. The lightnings seemed to leap into the chapel the moment she opened it, like a pack of eager dogs rushing in before their master. Swifter than greyhounds the cold white-and-blue radiance flashed over the cold white-and-blue of the azulejos, and then licked back into the dark.

In her retreat from the rain Isabel had forgotten supernatural terrors. But as soon as she was fairly over the threshold Joanninha's ghost-story rushed anew into her mind, and she was thankful for the lightnings which had shewn her that the place was empty. Yet she dared not shut herself up in the chapel; so she resolved to stand just inside.

Without any warning a third gust sucked the great door out of her weak hand. The oak fell to, with a bang which was nearly drowned in a sharp clap of

thunder. Isabel leapt back to reopen it, and tugged at the handle with all her might. But the bolts and springs of the lock had done their work. And the key was outside.

Isabel did not lose her head. As soon as she had recovered from the first shock, the good blood of her old English stock thrilled in her veins. Here was an adventure. Antonio instantly flew into her thoughts, as usual. To-morrow she would meet Antonio. To-morrow she would tell him, this contemptuous Antonio, how she had passed a night of thunder and lightning in a haunted chapel. To-morrow Antonio should be made to realise what sort of a woman he was flouting. To-morrow Antonio would hang his head at the thought of his dull, superstitious, spiritless Portuguese bride.

Propping herself against the wall she took stock of the situation. The chapel was dry; and although her dress was wet it was not wet enough to give her a cold. In four or five hours it would be daylight, and she would have courage to find the spiral staircase. Once on the flat roof of the cloister she would be able to see Jackson and the other servants searching for her. Jackson and the servants and Antonio. They would be sure to send first thing for Antonio.

The warmth with which she pictured Antonio's arrival ebbed away when she suddenly remembered that she was leaning against the blue-and-white tile-painting of the Saint's death at Tyburn. With a little shiver she crossed over to the azulejos representing the Saint's birth. Meanwhile, the rain was still lashing the glass, and the thunder was making a din like the toppling of crags into cañons. What troubled her most was the jewelled crown on the head of the image above

the altar. The bluish-white lightning seemed to have an affinity for the bluish-white stones, and several times Isabel felt sure that the brilliance lingered among the points of the diadem after it had fled from the rest of the chapel.

Once she could have sworn that some one entered through the cloister doorway, and that footsteps sounded upon the pavement; but the thunder was loud at the time, and she decided that she had only heard its reverberations. None the less, the fright weakened her nerve. All in a moment she felt weary, chilly, hungry, and so utterly miserable that she nearly cried. She pulled herself up in time and tried to brace up her nerves by chewing the bitter bark of irony. 'This is one of my lucky days,' she said to herself. 'From this morning onward it has been wholly delightful. What a good grateful girl I ought to be!'

An ear-splitting clap of thunder put an end to her soliloquy. So awful was the crash that Isabel listened shuddering for the noise of falling walls and roofs. Not one stone or slate gave way; but she heard a sound a thousand times more fearful. It was a voice, a mumbling voice which seemed to prolong the worn-out rumblings of the thunder; a voice deep and rich; the voice of a man; a voice somewhere in the chapel.

Her heart nearly stopped beating. She strained terrified eyes into the farthest darkness. And she did not strain them in vain. In close succession four or five white beams of lightning lit up the choir.

A monk, in black, was kneeling before the altar.

Isabel's piercing scream was louder than the thunder and the rain. She collapsed in a heap on the pavement. But she did not swoon. Struggling to her feet she

dashed herself desperately against the massive door. It stood like a rock. Moaning wildly she dragged at the lock with both hands. It did not yield a hair's-breadth. A moment later she heard footsteps; and turning round she had one lightning vision of the black monk hurrying towards her. She shrieked again and made a dash in the direction of the cloister doorway. Before she could reach it another white flash shewed her the black monk only an arm's length away. As the flash passed she struck a mad blow into the darkness and, hitting nothing, she stumbled and fell forward. But two strong, unghostly arms caught her just in time; and instead of striking the cold stones she found herself upheld by something soft and warm.

Without waiting for the lightning to reveal his face Isabel knew that she was in the arms of Antonio. Never in her life before had she yielded to any man's caress save the rare and shamefaced kisses of her father. Yet Antonio's arms seemed to be her natural place, like its nest to a bird. For a few seconds she did not think of identifying the black monk. She believed that the black monk had been on the point of striking her dead, and that some grand magic of love had conjured up Antonio to stand between them in the nick of time. Trembling like a leaf and panting like a runner after a race she pressed and clung to him, as a terrified child clings to its mother in the dark.

'You are Isabel?' said Antonio. He had known from her first scream that it was she; but he thought it might comfort her to hear his voice speaking her name.

'Yes. I am Isabel,' she murmured. And although a sharp memory of the plighted Bride bade her banish

herself at once from his clasp she abandoned herself more than before to the warmth and softness of his gentle strength.

'You are safe, quite safe,' he said; for she was still trembling all over. 'There is no ghost. It was only I.'

No ghost? Only he? What did it mean? Isabel roused her deliciously drowsing wits. No ghost. Only he. She opened her eyes. But the chapel was filled full with darkness, and she could not see his face.

A moment afterwards a prolonged blazing of huge lightnings made the place brighter than day. The azulejos, the high windows, and the gilded carvings shone out like blue and white and yellow fires. Isabel could see Antonio's anxious eyes gazing down into her own. And she had time to see much more. She saw his Benedictine habit; she saw that he and the black monk were one and the same man.

She leapt away from him in terror. But terror did not endure. At the touch of his reassuring hand seeking her arm in the gloom, a light as bright as the lightning's blazed within her and a thunderbolt of overwhelming joy swept her off her feet. With a great cry of gladness she flung herself once more against his breast.

'It's true, it's really true?' she clamoured. 'Speak. Answer me at once. You're not deceiving me? Your Bride is not a real woman after all?'

'You have surprised my secret, and I trust you to keep it,' he answered. 'When the monks were here they knew me as Father Antonio.'

'Antonio, Antonio, Antonio—what a beautiful name!' she cried. 'Come, Father Antonio, tell me. Your

Bride is only Religion, or the Church, or the Virgin, or something like that ? '

Her tone dismayed the monk even more than her words shocked him ; and he remained silent.

' You cannot deny it,' she exulted. Another flash of lightning silenced her ; but the radiant eyes and glowing cheeks on which it shone were more eloquent than her words. And as soon as the swift darkness closed over them her words rang in it like New Year's bells at midnight. ' You don't deny it, you can't, you daren't,' she sang. ' Your Bride is all a mere sentiment, like the azulejos ; a romance ; an ideal.'

' First of all,' demanded Antonio, ' how did you come here to-night ? '

' God sent me. I believe there's a God, at last.'

He moved a little, so as to loosen her clasp. But, in her almost hysterical rapture, she did not perceive the movement.

' You are wet through,' he said. But she only answered :

' What does it matter ? '

' Quick ! ' he commanded. ' There is a lull in the rain. You must go home this moment.'

' I won't,' said she. ' We will stay here.'

' Isabel,' he retorted sternly, ' we will not stay here. You are mad. The storm has driven you out of your senses. Or perhaps it was the ghost you thought you saw. You must go home this instant. What if you have been missed ? What if your servants should find us here ? What will Mrs. Baxter say ? And what shall I say to your father ? '

Until he spoke his last sentence Isabel heard him unmoved ; but at the thought of her father the arms

which held Antonio weakened. Very slowly she let him go. None the less, she sought to argue. The monk, however, enforced his will. Gripping her arm he marched her almost roughly to the west door, and fumbled for the lock.

'It's no use,' she said. 'The key is outside. We must stay here.'

His only answer was to take her arm again and to lead her through the smaller doorway into the cloister. At the moment of their emerging from the chapel a shaft of lightning lit up a bubbling lake of muddy water, under which lay drowned the cloister garden. Two sides of the cloister itself were also under water.

'I am frightened,' she said, with genuine fear, as Antonio drew her into a gloomy corridor. He could feel her shrinking back and trembling; so he threw his arm around her waist and hurried her on. As they passed through the kitchen the uproar of the torrent reminded Antonio of the night of his fight with José. But he did not pause. He threaded passage after passage, room after room, until he had worked round to the little door with the Reading monk's secret lock. His fingers searched among the hidden levers, and at last the door stood open.

Frequent lightning still swept sea and land; but the thunder had dragged its great guns northward and was pounding over Navares. The rain had ceased. The monk, however, did not hurry Isabel over the threshold; for the overarching trees were pouring down water like an aqueduct cracked by an earthquake. He considered earnestly.

'Come,' he said, with an abruptness which startled her. 'I must wrap you in this cloak.'

With much tucking and folding he contrived to wrap his habit about her slender body and to adjust the mantilla over her fragrant hair.

'Now, I suppose, I'm a nun,' she laughed.

The speech would have stung him had he not remembered her behaviour in his cell, twelve days before, and her evident persuasion that monks and nuns were only picturesque archaisms, with no serious existence outside the pages of novelists and the dreams of pious sentimentalists. But he did not give her time to expand her flippancy.

'Let us go,' he said.

They went. For about twenty paces the paved causeway which led to the little door gave them dry foothold. Thenceforward, however, the paths to the guest-house had become rushing streams. Even without the aid of the lightning one could see gleaming water everywhere. Isabel glanced down dolefully at her feet.

'We can't,' she said.

'We must,' he insisted.

'Look at my shoes,' she moaned.

Antonio considered again. Then he asked:

'You will let me carry you?'

'If we can't wait,' she answered, after a long pause, 'and if you're sure there's no other way . . . you may carry me.'

He stepped down from the causeway and bent his back so that she could seat herself upon his shoulder.

'You must hold fast,' he said.

Very shyly she slipped round his neck a soft arm which trembled. Antonio straightened himself up and plashed forward. Once or twice he came to dips in the

path where the water was higher than his knees, but the young giant stamped through the whirlpools like another Saint Christopher. On they went, guided by the flickering lightning. At length they reached the main path. It was hardly ankle deep in water. He quickened his pace, until the guest-house loomed in sight. Then he gently set Isabel down on a boulder away from the drip of the trees and released her from the clumsy habit, which he folded up and laid on another great stone.

'You left the door unlocked?' he whispered.

'Yes.'

'For Heaven's sake don't speak so loud. Better still, don't speak at all. I'm going to carry you as softly as I can to the steps. Don't breathe a word on the way. And don't open the door until I am back under the trees. I shall wait to see that you are safe. Now!'

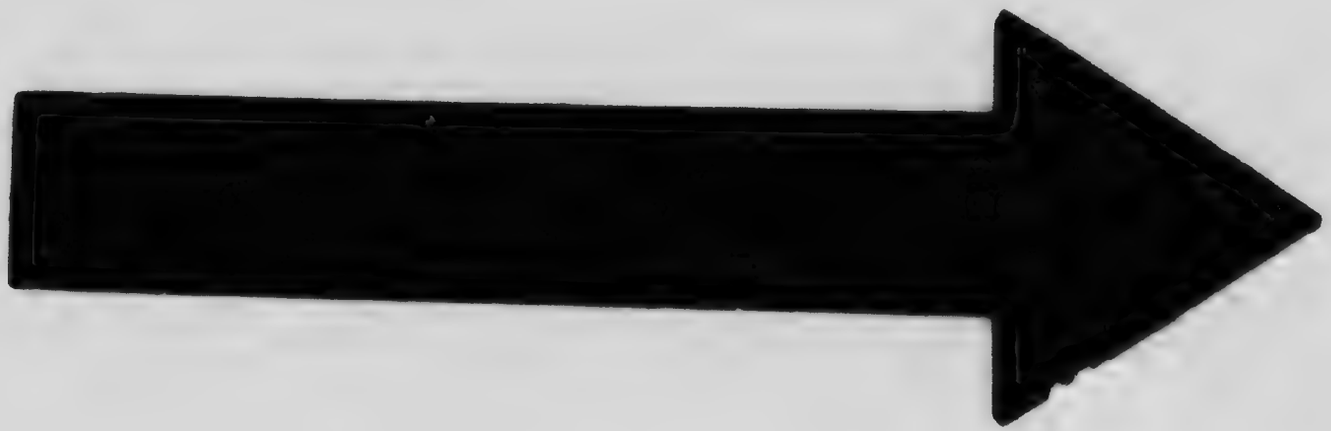
'No, no, not yet,' she whispered.

'Yes. Now. This moment. You are mad.'

'I know. But, Antonio, promise. To-morrow morning. At the cascade.'

'I promise,' he said.

Once more he lifted her up: but this time, as the distance was so short, he carried her in his arms like a child. He did not look at her; but he knew that she was strangely light with a fairy lightness, that her shoulders were snow and her hair pure gold, and that she was as fine and delicate as a lily. Before he took his first stride towards the guest-house he paused, straining his ears for any sound within. Around him, in the woods, a hundred little streams went bubbling and tinkling. Here and there thankful birds were piping their peace-pipes after the din of the battle.



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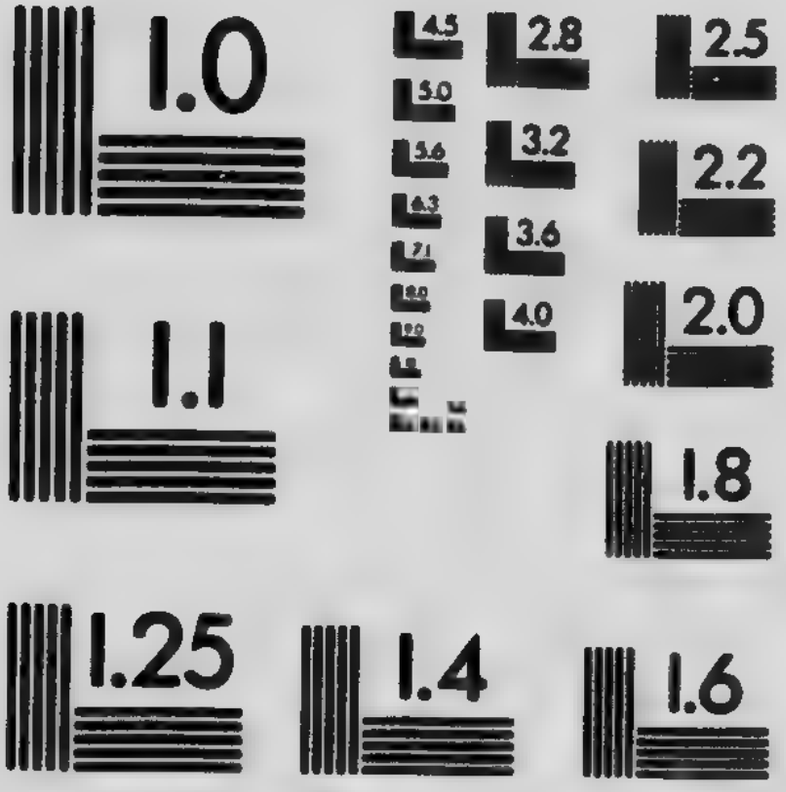

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The chaunt of the Atlantic, freshened by the breeze, was loud and glad.

'Listen, Antonio,' she murmured. 'All the world is singing.'

Gripping her as if he would choke her next words before she could speak them, the monk crossed the path. Twelve strides sufficed him for their journey. At the foot of the steps he put her down: and, before she could whisper Good-night, he was speeding noiselessly back to the great stone.

As soon as she had entered the guest-house and closed the door he made haste to put on his habit; for the air had grown cold. Then he shrank into the dripping trees and waited. By this time the clouds were gone and the stars were shining.

Isabel appeared at the window and beckoned imperiously. He stole softly forward and saw her hand moving like a white butterfly among the creepers clustering round the casement. She broke off a half-blown rose which had not been shattered by the storm and threw it to Antonio. He caught it deftly: but his fingers closed too tightly on its thorns, and when he re-entered the abbey to exchange his habit for his old cloak he saw that the white flower was flecked and veined with blood.

VII

It was Isabel who arrived first at the pool. She found the stepping-stones impassable. A cypress had been struck by lightning, and the wind and rain had torn millions of autumn leaves from the other trees. But the storm was over, the mists and stifling heats were gone, and the clear sunshine was tempered by a pleasant breeze.

When Antonio joined her the roar of the swollen cataract was so enormous that he had almost to shcut in her ear.

'We must go somewhere else,' he said. 'Here we can't hear ourselves speak. And the ground is too wet. Come.'

She followed as he led the way up the mountain. Reaching a point where the torrent was pent within a resounding gorge they leapt easily to the other side. Then they descended, slanting away from the water, until they came to a stone platform which supported a small ruinous chapel. It was one of the oldest shrines in the domain; but Antonio could not remember the time when it had contained an image or an altar.

'You have hurt your hand,' she said. 'What has cut it?'

'The thorns of a rose,' he answered quietly.

His curtness disappointed Isabel. After her painful experience of his perverse obstinacy the morning before, she could not expect him to be converted from his

folly or cured of his religious mania all in a moment, and she had come prepared for vigorous debate. But his cold self-possession and, above all, his avoidance of her eyes, dismayed her.

'Of course, you've thrown the rose away?' she asked.

'No, I have not thrown it away.'

'Why?'

He spread his cloak on a carved stone bench for her to sit on, and did not answer.

'Why?' she repeated. 'I want Father Antonio to explain. Are monks allowed to treasure up dead flowers? You'll be asking next for a tress of my hair.'

He maintained his grim silence. Embarrassment and injured pride coloured her cheeks a warm red; but she was determined to make him speak.

'I mean,' she added, 'that you won't ask for a lock of my hair at all. You'll expect me to go down in the dust and offer it you on my knees, and to coax you and implore you for days and days until you condescend to accept it. Your Majesty is a true Lord of Creation. He leaves me to do all the wooing.'

This time Antonio looked at her fairly and squarely. She sat down and faced him with a pout on her lips and a toss of the head. In her heart she felt sure of victory; and she yearned to get over the preliminary skirmishes as soon as possible.

'Begin, your Reverence,' she said. 'Preach at me. Excommunicate me. Do your worst. I am ready.'

'Ought I to begin,' he asked, 'by craving pardon for trespassing last night in the chapel?'

'No, you ought not. It wouldn't be sincere; because you believe the chapel is more yours than mine.

And, most decidedly, you oughtn't to begin as if we are mortal enemies. Why are your tones as sharp and cold as icicles? And why do you glare at me as if you hate me?'

'I hate nobody,' he replied. 'But I hate this talk which we are compelled to have.'

'Then let us make haste and be done with it. Explain. I want to know why you pretend to be still a monk when you're really a farmer?'

'I pretend nothing,' said Antonio firmly. 'You will keep my secret. You will not name it even to your father. Above all, you will hide it from your servants and from the chief of the Villa Branca Fazenda. I am, and I shall be till I die, a monk of the Order of Saint Benedict.'

'Monks have been abolished in Portugal for years and years,' she objected.

'You mean that monks have been exiled and monasteries suppressed. Monks cannot be abolished. Men can pull down blinds and put up shutters and sit in darkness; but they cannot abolish the sun.'

'Choose some other illustration,' she begged. 'Surely it is monks who put up shutters and draw down blinds and shut out the light.'

She proceeded to rattle off half a dozen well-worn objections to the monastic life. Her words were her own; but underneath their freshness and liveliness Antonio recognised the stock tirade against monks and nuns which he had heard twenty times in England. He listened patiently till she had finished. Then he said:

'We are not thinking of the same thing. Such monks and nuns as you are scorning do not exist. They are figments of your controversialists. They are

stuffed figures, set up like skittles to be knocked down again. May I speak quite candidly?'

'Speak quite candidly, or do not speak at all,' she answered.

'And personally?'

'The more personally the better.'

'Then listen. You remember our first Wednesday—the day you and I and young Crowberry went all through the monastery?'

'You mean the day you brought me the little blue bird with the orange-coloured tail?'

'You remember,' continued Antonio, 'how I shewed you a monk's cell. That cell was mine. I lived in it for seven years. You pulled open all the drawers and looked inside the cupboard.'

Isabel flushed crimson, and demanded indignantly:

'How did I know it was yours?'

'You didn't know it was mine,' he answered gently. 'Still, it was certainly somebody's. For a moment, as you peeped and rummaged, I was distressed and disappointed. How could I reconcile it with your delicacy? But I soon found the answer. I understood that you thought of monks as you might think of your British Druids or of the Crusaders or of the Incas of Peru or of the Andalusian Moors—men that have lived and breathed once, men that were picturesque, men that figure well in romances, but, most of all, men that are utterly dead and gone and done with. Perhaps it is natural for you so to think. Your England has been without monks, save in holes and corners, for three hundred years.'

She was on the point of asking what all this might be leading to, when he added:

'Again, last night, when I wrapped you in my habit, you laughed and said: "Now I suppose I am a nun." You no more intended to make fun of holy things than a bird intends sacrilege when it darts into a church and knocks down candles and vases with its wings. But you said it, all the same.'

'I don't deny saying it,' she retorted; 'I know perfectly well that I am coarse and wicked enough to say anything.'

'I am not blaming you, Isabel,' he said gently. 'You are not coarse and you are not wicked. We are at variance on the greatest of issues; but may God forbid that we should quarrel.'

The softness with which he spoke her name disarmed Isabel; and the fountains of lovingkindness which overbrimmed his words quenched the fire of wrath in her breast. To make sure that he was forgiven Antonio gazed at her with eyes so full of the old searching tenderness that a lump rose in her throat, and she looked away.

'No, I am not blaming you, Isabel,' he continued. 'What I mean is this. You find it impossible to take all these things seriously. You think I enjoy dressing up in a monk's cowl and reciting a monk's Latin Office in a monk's stall, pretty much as other men enjoy putting on crowns and ermine and going to masques as princes and kings. You don't see that the mere cowl is very little more than nothing, and that a monk's faith and hope and love are nearly everything. You cried out in the chapel last night: "So your Bride is only Religion, or only the Church, or only the Virgin." Yes, "Only." You said "only." And I am not quibbling on a mere word. You meant that a mortal bride—such

a bride, for example, as Margarida—would be more real, more important, more entitled to my lifelong loyalty.'

He ceased. After pondering a little she raised her eyes and said:

'In the main you are right. I'm afraid my vague notions of monks are not worth the trouble; but you have analysed them correctly. In England we have some people who want to revive mediæval tournaments with mailed men and horses, and lists, and queens of beauty, all complete. To me a modern monastery is practically the same thing, except that it's less interesting and more useless.'

'I do not know enough of your mind,' he said slowly. 'After all, monasticism is not the whole of the Church. The Church is wider and older than her religious orders. Do you object only to monasticism in particular? Or are you equally impatient of the Church in general?'

'By the Church,' she answered, 'no doubt you mean Roman Catholicism. If so, I'm not a fair judge. I was educated with a bias against it, and I am gradually finding out that I was taught a great deal which was unfair and much that was untrue. But I will answer you as frankly as possible. Don't be hurt. I love the Church as I love a ruin in a landscape; but I should not love her if somebody should accomplish the impossible, and put her in a thorough state of repair.'

Springing up she stepped to the tumbledown shrine and laid her hands on the mossy shafts of its ivy-hung portal.

'Be honest,' she said. 'Is not this little chapel far more beautiful in decay than ever it was when the roof didn't leak and these creepers were not allowed to

twine about it? If I could wave a wand and bid every beauty-spot of moss vanish from the walls and make all the stones dead-white and all the angles sharp and true, would you love it as you do now? And it's the same, th- very same, with the Church. When she was mistress of Europe, she was gaunt and hard and repellent. But she is marvellously picturesque in her decay. I don't know what our poets and painters and romancers would do without her.'

'I still read English papers, and I know what you mean,' said Antonio. 'There is a fashion growing up among your poets of making free with the holiest things. They affect the reverence and simplicity of mediæval believers when, in reality, they are robbing altars and looting sacristies to fill a property-box with theatrical properties. Chalices, censers, copes, chasubles, dalmatics, mitres, pyxes; bishops, abbots, nuns, monks, friars, acolytes; crypts, stained glass, pointed arches, carven canopies—I see that all these are no more to them than stage backgrounds, stage puppets, stage dresses, stage tricks.'

'It makes the poems and paintings much more gorgeous, anyhow,' she interrupted.

'No doubt,' said Antonio sternly. 'Just as the palaces and harems of the Turks were more gorgeous after they had sacked the Holy Places. Let the Church be persecuted more than ever in your country, and I do not fear for her; but I tremble at the thought of your cleverest men taking her name in vain and praising her with their lips, while they are still obstinate pagans in their hearts and lives. Out of such blasphemy I foresee the birth of monstrous sins.'

'Until this morning,' retorted Isabel, grievously dis-

appointed in him, 'I thought you were no worse than over-pious, and a little over-sentimental about your religious memories. I could never have believed that you would be bigoted and narrow-minded. Your prophecy only makes me shudder. I repeat that the beautiful decay of the Church is bringing more beauty into art; and I believe that more beauty in art will bring more beauty into life. Yet you say it will give birth to monstrous sins.'

For a long time Antonio did not reply. When he spoke his tone was so much altered that Isabel thought he accepted his defeat in argument.

'Look at this,' he said, pointing to a stone which lay near his foot. It had been a gargoyle on the shrine, but must have fallen to the ground before Antonio was born. Even if the shallow carving had not been almost rubbed away by the hand of time Isabel could hardly have made out its outlines through the silken mosses and tiny ivies which covered it.

'It was part of the shrine once,' he said. 'I admit it looks more beautiful broken off and lying here in decay. I've never noticed it before. It ought to be in the porch. It isn't heavy. Will you help me to carry it?'

They stooped down together. The unclouded sun had already dried both the gargoyle and its mossage and leafage. Isabel took her fair share of the work, and between them they easily lifted the stone from the ground. But they had not borne it twenty inches towards the shrine before she let go and sprang clear, with a scream. The gargoyle struck upon a knob of rock and smashed into three pieces.

Antonio's glance followed Isabel's. She was gazing

with horror at the long black grave from which they had wrenched the stone. It was a nest of centipedes. The creatures writhed this way and that, like the letter S, incalculably multiplied and gone mad. Some of them were bright scarlet, some were sickly yellow. Beyond them, half of a long worm, bald and clammy, lay across the slimy track of some hidden slug. A scurrying ear-wig touched it, and the worm disappeared as if by magic into the earth. Meanwhile two horny beetles were shouldering their way through the stubby grass.

The monk had hardly realised the success of his too vivid allegory when he saw that Isabel had snatched up her skirts and fled. He grabbed his cloak and leapt after her; but although he was almost immediately at her side, she continued her flight without recognising his existence. After two or three minutes a swollen tributary of the torrent brought her to a halt.

'I am so sorry,' he said, very humbly. 'I never thought it could be so horrible as that.'

'You're sorry too late,' she cried. 'I know you love me; yet you're always acting as if you despise me. It's your chief delight to humiliate me. Religion ruins you. Till we get to religion your heart is tenderer than a woman's; but, when religion comes in, I believe you'd burn me at the stake and feel proud of it.'

Great tears came into her eyes; but before he saw them he had already recognised how thoughtless and unkind he had been in luring her to lift the gargoyle. The sight of the tears completed his repentance.

'With my whole heart I ask pardon,' he pleaded, 'although what I did was almost unpardonable. I didn't think; but it was selfish and brutal to score a point like that. Isabel, try to forgive me.'

Whenever he spoke her name and looked into her eyes she became as clay in his hands. But Antonio did not know it. He took her silence to mean anything but pardon; and therefore his tone was humbler than ever as he added:

'We cannot part like this, Isabel. These rocks are dry and warm to your feet. We shall find no better spot.'

He spread his cloak for her once more, and sat down at her side. Two or three minutes passed without a word. Then she said:

'If I am all wrong about monks, I am willing to be put right. What are monks for? Why do they exist?'

Antonio hesitated. There were so many gaps in her knowledge and in her sympathy. How could he explain the topmost flowering of churchly life to one who knew so little of the root and the trunk and the branches? At last he replied:

'You have spoken of painters and writers. Is it not true that both painting and writing have advanced almost entirely through the diligence of professional writers and painters? How soon the amateur slips back without the example of the professional to steady him! In our wars we have always found that a few professional soldiers can stiffen citizen levies who would otherwise run away. Monks, so to speak, are the professional Christians, devoting their lives to piety and the pursuit of perfection. I don't mean that they are professional like your English clergy. Monks are not professional shepherds. I might say that they are professional sheep, a professional flock, exemplifying, as Christians in the world can hardly do, blamelessness,

simplicity, and obedience at every moment to their divine Shepherd's voice.'

He paused; but Isabel made no comment.

'In comparing monks with professionals,' he said uneasily, 'I know I am putting it on rather a low level.'

'So I thought,' she said. And with a leap of his heart, he understood that she was not outside the range of Christian spirituality.

'Then we will put it higher,' he continued eagerly. 'Grant for a moment that Christianity is true. Grant that the everlasting God, Who carved these hills and poured out yonder Atlantic, once imprisoned Himself in space and time and became a mortal man. Grant that before He died for us, He begged for our lifelong love and trust, and for our daily praise and prayer, and good deeds and obedience and self-denial. Grant that He told us how this present life of ours is only a short road leading into a boundless life to come. For the moment you will grant all this?'

She bowed her head.

'Granting it, what do we find?' he asked. 'We find the vast majority of men and women, including those who profess to believe His words, living for themselves instead of for Him. "Seven times in a day have I sung praises unto Thee," said the Psalmist, who died so long before our Lord was born; yet millions of Christians do not truly praise God seven times in their lives. They rarely think of Him save in time of trouble or in the hour of death. The monk is a man who throws all his poor weight into the other scale, striving to redress the balance. In union with the one Mediator he prays for those who will not pray. He offers praises in the stead of those who will not praise. The scoffer

twits him with his unnatural life; but it is not more unnatural to give God all one's thoughts than it is unnatural to give Him none.'

'Not more unnatural, perhaps,' objected Isabel, 'but it is unnatural enough, all the same.'

'It may be so. But the monk is born into an unnatural state of things. If no man gave God too little, perhaps we should have no need of monks to give Him what men call too much. Perhaps so: perhaps not. I don't decide. Some monkish writers have seemed to say that even if all men were saints it would still be good for a few to detach themselves from the whirl of life and to offer God more perfect praises; just as there have been theologians to teach that, even if man had not sinned, God would still have been made Man, so as to perfect our humanity. But let such subtleties pass.'

'Whether I agree with it or not, I see what you mean,' said Isabel. 'But is a monk no more than this?'

'He is much more,' replied Antonio, 'so much more that if we sat here all day we should hardly understand how much. But I will mention one thing more. Not only do the masses of Christians hold back their love and service from God; they also outrage His goodness and dim His glory every hour of every day.'

'But monks can't mend that matter,' protested Isabel. 'I'm no theologian and I'm a double heretic; but I've always been told that my right can't atone for your wrong. One man can't redeem another.'

'No,' said Antonio, 'but one man's prayers may drive another in penitence to the Redeemer. "We are members one of another." You love science. Let me

prophesy. Science will teach us some day how subtly mind is intertwined with mind, and how mightily a thought or an aspiration can leap from one soul to another. There is enough of sin and shame in Christendom to make the angels weep; but God alone knows how much more there would be if faithful nuns were not pushing that black bulk back, all night and all day, with white hands of prayer.'

Isabel desisted from further debate. But no sooner was the stress of argument eased in her brain than a millstone of fear settled heavily upon her heart. Up to that moment she had felt sure of her power as a living and beautiful woman to triumph over Antonio's shadowy Bride. Although his cool greeting had annoyed her, and although she was still a trifle ruffled by the affair of the gargoyle and the centipedes, she had found zest in his monkish coyness. Like many a huntress before her she had deemed the quarry's elusiveness charming so long as she was confident that in the long run he would be caught. But, all in a single moment, her eyes were opened both to the solemn grandeur of Antonio's religion and to the startling energy of his whole-hearted, whole-minded belief in it. The shadowy Bride suddenly towered like an impassable, immeasurable, resplendent Jungfrau across Isabel's path.

'I see what you mean,' she said hastily, trying to push back her crowding fears. 'It's interesting, it's wonderful, I suppose it's beautiful in a kind of way; but what has it to do with us? You're not a monk any longer. You can't be. You say it isn't the cowl that makes the monk; and surely, it isn't mere bricks and mortar that make a monastery. The old abbey down there is an empty shell. Your Abbot is dead.

Your brethren are dead too, or in perpetual exile. Th
Order has come to an end. You may play at being
monk; but you are free.'

Antonio began to explain the Solemn Vows. But sh
interrupted him scornfully.

'Circumstances alter cases,' she said. 'Beside
hadn't you better ask your conscience if you are no
really worshipping your vows, worshipping your con
sistency, instead of worshipping God? God will b
poorly worshipped by making yourself miserable—
yourself and . . . and me.'

Her voice so softened on the last two syllables tha
the monk's lips could not frame an argumentativ
retort. Yet she must be answered. Although he di
not look at her, he could feel that the irons of her ordea
were already glowing too hot for her endurance. Some
thing had to be done. At last he said:

'Without intending it you have told me, a scrap at
time, the story of your life. May I tell you the story o
mine?'

Her sorrowful eyes lit up gratefully. 'Tell me ever
word,' she said.

In the simplest language he could command, Antoni
told her all. He began by stating quite baldly the fac
of his noble lineage. Then he described briefly his child
hood in Lisbon and at Cintra, and his first sight of a
Englishman in the person of a fair-haired young captai
who had been wounded at the battle of Bussaco. H
told of his 'teens in Madeira, and of the drowning of hi
parents and sisters on their way thither to join him; o
his appointment to a scandalous sinecure in the gift o
the Government, and of his retreat from a positio
which he could do nothing to reform; of his excursio

into French scepticism; of his religious vocation and of his struggles against it; and of his life in the monastery up to the day of his ordination to the priesthood.

To the narrating of these events Antonio devoted barely a quarter of an hour. When, however, he began to tell of the monks' expulsion he let himself go; and thenceforward his warmth of tone and liveliness of language made Isabel realise vividly every scene he described. With kindling eyes he told her of the dying Abbot's prophecy; of his halt at the deserted farm on the afternoon of the exodus, and of his resolve to win back the monastery for Saint Benedict's family; of his bitter hour in the granary at Navares; of his tramp northward; of his hard life in Oporto; of his never-to-be-forgotten months in England and France and Spain; of his return to the abbey; of his snub at Villa Branca; of José; of Margarida; and of young Crowberry's mysterious candle in the guest-house window.

'The rest you know,' he said.

Throughout his recital he had gazed at the rocks, the sky, the trees, the water; but, as he ended, he glanced nervously at Isabel, hungering for her sympathy yet expecting her scorn. To his amazement she slipped from her place at his side, sank down on her knees beside him, seized both his hands in hers, and said:

'Poor Antonio! You poor Antonio. My poor Antonio!'

Her voice was tenderer than a mother's crooning over a wounded child. Tears were brimming her eyes and flowing down her cheeks as she gazed up into the monk's face. Then her voice broke. She bowed her head abruptly and tried to hide her face in her hands. But she did not let Antonio's hands go; and her tears laved the wounds torn by the thorns of her rose.

Antonio could have endured her contempt; but this outburst of a pitying woman's love, the first he had known for five-and-twenty years, almost broke his heart. Thrice he devised words of consolation; thrice they were stifled in his throat. He could only sit and watch the convulsive rise and fall of her shoulders as the sobbing shook her frame. Once she controlled herself enough to look up and moan:

'Why, oh why, must we be so unhappy?'

The monk knew that an answer was not expected, so he sat silent. But later on, when some calmness had returned to her, she put the question again.

'Why must we be so unhappy? If God can do everything, why has He made a world that goes so badly? Why has He made the easy things sins and only the hard things virtues? Why has He made His creatures so inclined to anger Him or forget Him? It seems mad. It seems almost diabolical. I've never met a wicked man or a foolish woman who could be foolish enough or wicked enough to make a world like this if they had the power. Why is God worse than we are?'

'You do not mean what you say,' he answered, soothing her. 'You know you are not putting it fairly. You——'

'I know, I know,' she interrupted. 'I am shallow, I am unjust, I suppose I'm almost blasphemous. Forgive me if I've hurt you. Only, your God is so terrible. I believe in Him; but I'm frightened. He is nothing but grandeur and majesty. He will have no rebellion. He insists on everybody's homage all the time.'

'He is Love, everlasting Love,' said Antonio warmly, 'and if any words of mine have made you doubt it, may He forgive me. I see the world's unbelief, first and

foremost, as Love rejected; and if I am a monk it is in the hope that my whole life's prayers may perchance be one poor drop of balm poured into Love's wounds. But these matters are too weighty to be talked of like this. The origin of evil, the mystery of free-will—you have raised the problems that none can solve.'

'Let us leave them alone,' she pleaded. 'I hate them. Deep down in my heart, I do not disbelieve. Before you had half finished your story, my pride was broken. Yes, when you pictured the chapel on the night you returned, and the moonlight lingering on the crown of Jesus, I knelt with you in spirit before that altar and words came back to my lips that I hadn't said since I was a child.'

In exceeding thankfulness he was about to speak; but she hurried on.

'Antonio,' she said, 'if you send me away, perhaps you will think of me as a temptress—a woman raised up by the devil to blandish you aside from your holy purpose, and to lure you into trampling upon your vows. Promise you will never think of me like that. Kneeling here on my knees, I swear before God that I am not . . . that.'

She paused. Then, with her head bent so that he could not see her face, and in low tones, she added slowly:

'I have only wanted to be near you—to be with you, to spend all the rest of my life listening to you, helping you. Heaven knows there has never been for a moment anything . . . anything base in my love. I know what most people mean by love and I loathe it. Tell me you don't misunderstand. Say you believe me. Promise you'll never think of me like that.'

'I promise,' said Antonio, deeply moved. And, tr
as he would, he could say no more.

After a long time she raised her head abruptly an
challenged his eyes. By the pallor which blanched he
cheeks he divined her question, and he knew that th
bitterest moment of his life was come.

'So there is no room for me?' she asked in low
vibrating tones. 'No room for Isabel as well as fo
your Bride? You send me away?'

He tried to be cool; but the flame of her pure heart'
yearning so scorched him that he cried out:

'No, I do not send you away. It is not my will; i
is God's. He knows, Isabel, He knows that all th
sacrifices I have ever made and all the trials I have eve
borne are as a few grains of dust compared with this
I do not send you away. But you must go. Our spirit
are willing to take high and holy vows, here and now
but we are flesh and we are weak. You must go. Yo
must. You will.'

She arose slowly and stood upright. Instantly h
did the same. He seized her hand; but before h
could speak, she said quietly:

'I will go. After this, unless miracles happen, yo
will only see me with Mrs. Baxter or with my father
But, before I go, do me one little kindness. I promis
that, so long as I live, it shall be a secret between us
I know your heart. Once, only once, let me hear yo
say that you love me.'

Antonio knew that he loved her indeed, with a lov
whereof he had no cause to be ashamed, and that h
must speak the three little words she craved. H
began to frame a prudent preface which should precisel
qualify them and empty them of all their associatio

with profane passion. But his knightly blood stirred in time and saved him. Besides, he knew that he might safely speak the words and trust Isabel not to abuse them. He bent to her ear and said simply :

'I love you.'

For a long moment she stood with closed eyes and did not stir. Then she gently freed her hand and moved away. Antonio followed her. Wherever the paths were wide enough they walked side by side ; but although the way was long they did not speak. Here and there in the wood there were low boughs to be held aside, and once the monk had to lift her bodily across a little brook ; but he did all these things as a matter of course, without a word. When the guest-house gleamed through the trees, Antonio halted and would have uttered the few sentences he had been arranging in his brain ; but she silenced him with a gentle gesture and walked across the broad path, up the sunny steps, and through the wide-open doorway, without a glance behind.

VIII

Not more than two hours after Antonio's return to hi farm a messenger arrived from the guest-house and handed in two letters. The first ran :

Mrs. Baxter presents her compliments to Signor da Rocha and begs to request that he will call to-day without fail, as Mrs. B. is under the unpleasant obligation of making a painful communication to Signor R.

The second letter was shorter still. It contained the single line :

I must see you too.

Antonio's amazement quickly gave place to indigna- tion. He had examined his conscience concerning the whole business too often to deceive himself, and he knew that he was not to blame for what had happened. Yet here he was, summoned to endure a lecture from the vulgar Mrs. Baxter. Worse still, when Sir Percy came back he would be told the tale. Antonio would be regarded ever afterwards as an abuser of a sacred trust, a heartless trifler with young affections, an out- sider, a brute, a cur fit for the horse-whip. And he would have to suffer all this injustice in silence, because he could only clear himself by disgracing the lady.

As he grew cooler the monk became certain that Isabel had not deliberately betrayed him to Mrs.

Baxter. Probably she had broken down after her protracted excitements and had let slip some fatal admission in a moment of hysteria. Or perhaps a chattering servant had seen her walking with Antonio in the woods. Gravest possibility of all, some sharp eyes or ears might have detected her absence in the middle of the night. At this last thought he seized his hat and set out for the guest-house at once.

When he reached the road, still soft after the rain, some hoof-marks reassured him. He recognised them as the shoe-prints of Negro, an old post-horse ridden by the casual letter-carrier of Navares. News of some kind had evidently arrived from Sir Percy. Perhaps he was ill, or dying. The monk's heart melted towards Isabel as he perceived that new troubles were hurrying to smite her, and he would gladly have submitted to the bitter censures of Mrs. Baxter in their stead.

Isabel met him about fifty yards from the guest-house door. She looked more beautiful than ever, but her expression dismayed him. No traces lingered of the exaltation to which she had attained only a few hours before. She seemed proud, hard, defiant.

'We have heard from my father,' she said quickly. 'The unexpected—I mean the half-expected—has happened. We are to pack and go, as we have packed and gone from twenty places before. It isn't azulejos this time. It's a railway. But it'll be all the same in the end. He wants us to start for Lisbon the day after to-morrow. Mrs. Baxter will tell you everything.'

To Antonio's surprise she neither referred to her note nor said a word on her personal account, but led him straight into the salon where Mrs. Baxter was seated in the midst of confusion. Isabel's pictures had already

been removed from the walls, and Jackson could be heard in a back-room nailing down a packing-case. The noises fell on Antonio's heart like blows on a coffin-lid.

'I have learned, Madame, with concern, that you are compelled to undertake a fatiguing journey,' said Antonio in his most formal style. 'Let me repeat my assurance that I remain, at all times, entirely at your service.'

'I'm sure you do, Signor, I'm sure you do,' wailed Mrs. Baxter. 'But tell me, Signor, what do you think of it all? I was saying, only this morning, how comforting it was that we were settled for life, and how delightful it would be to spend the rest of my days in the salubrious air of this favoured spot, enlivened by the profitable conversation of a congenial neighbour.'

Isabel listened to her governess with a scornful lip. What Mrs. Baxter had really said, only that morning, was that she had determined to write Sir Percy her mind at once; that, through the almost incredible deficiencies of the village shops and the unscriptural errors of Joanninha, she was being starved and poisoned, both in body and soul; that she had never stayed in such a hole before, and never meant to again; that, after enjoying the intimacy of some of the first personages in England, she found it intolerable to have only one neighbour, especially when he was only a small yeoman with no table-napkins and not enough forks to go round; and, finally, that she flatly declined to remain after Christmas in any Portuguese place save Lisbon or Oporto.

'The Senhora does me too much honour,' said Antonio, without enthusiasm. 'But this is not final. The Senhoras will return?'

'Sir Percival Kaye-Templeman never returns anywhere,' snapped Mrs. Baxter, 'I declare, Signor, that he drags me about like a slave. If it hadn't been for my death-bed promise to the sainted mother of that darling child sitting on the blue ottoman, I should have left him a thousand times.'

The darling child arose from the blue ottoman and went to an escritoire. She opened a drawer and took something from it.

'Mrs. Baxter is forgetting to give you my father's letter,' she said. 'He tells us he has written to thank you for all you have done.'

Antonio received the sealed letter into his hand; and, as neither of the ladies proffered him leave to read it in their presence, he placed it in his breast-pocket.

'For the present my father also begs you to take the keys of the abbey,' added Isabel. 'Here they are. He says he has explained everything in his letter. As for this guest-house, there are only two keys. We will give them to you when we go, on Thursday.'

Antonio's heart leapt like a bird at her words about the abbey keys; but it sank like a stone as she said, 'we go on Thursday.' So violent was his agitation that, to cover it, he rose from his seat and advanced to the open drawer of the escritoire where the keys were lying. He dared not look at Isabel.

'If the chapel key is not here,' she said, in an off-hand way, 'you know where to find it.'

She placed the bunch in his hand. There were about twenty keys, great and small, bright and dull, and they tinkled together pleasantly as Antonio carried them back to his place. But they sounded in his ears more like a far-heard knell than a merry chime.

'I suppose you must go now?' she enquired.

'My pet, my darling pet,' expostulated Mrs. Baxter, looking daggers. 'What on earth will Signor de Rocha think? He'll think you want to hunt him out of the house.'

'So I do. There's a waterfall somewhere in the grounds. I want him, if he has time, to shew me the way to it. A waterfall and stepping-stones. Perhaps, Mrs. Baxter, you will come with us.'

'Stepping-stones!' gasped Mrs. Baxter. 'Not if they were made of solid gold. Not if you paid me a million pounds. Why, you've quite forgotten, Isabel, darling, that if it hadn't been for stepping-stones, poor little Lady Margaret Barricott would be alive to-day!'

'Then you won't come? Senhor da Rocha, have you really the leisure to take me?'

'I have the leisure,' answered Antonio formally. 'And, if I had not, leisure should be made. Mrs. Baxter, I will send up my man to-morrow to assist you in the packing of your goods, and I will certainly attend you on Thursday. Meanwhile, I am your obedient servant.'

Isabel was already in the ante-chamber and Antonio did not overtake her until she was descending the steps. Dangling the keys he walked beside her without speech until they reached the shelter of the trees. Then he drew from his pocket the long steel key of the chapel and halted a moment while he placed it among the others.

'You see that I had brought it,' he said. 'This morning I forgot to give it you.'

'Pray don't explain,' she commanded curtly. 'We've had explanations enough and to spare.'

He relocked the old-fashioned key-ring and they resumed their march, Isabel going first along the narrow path. Antonio felt thankful for the short respite from talk. He knew that he was on his way to the sharpest fight of all. Although there was nothing of love in Isabel's manner towards him, he divined that she had invited him to the cascade in order to overthrow him by some final argument or appeal.

Could he be sure that he would once more succeed in resistance? He took stock of his weapons and forces. In sheer dialectic he knew that he was Isabel's match; for the very slowness of his English gave him a certain advantage. Nor was he greatly her inferior in rhetorical resource. What he feared was Isabel's unconscious challenging of his chivalry. He did not dread the wiles of deliberate coquetry, even if she had been capable of practising them; and, most emphatically, he did not dread the seductiveness of her physical charms, because the stern battle against the flesh was a battle he had fought and won long years before. But he dreaded, with a dread nearly driving him into cowardice, the hateful task of bringing hot tears into her cool blue eyes and of breaking her soft voice into heart-broken sobbings.

He glanced at Isabel as she pressed onward a yard or so ahead. As always, she was the soul and body of grace. The poise of her golden head upon her swan-white neck, her proud shoulders, her exquisite waist, her fine hands plucking at the autumn leaves, her little feet which seemed hardly to touch the earth—all these charms were as adorable as ever. Yet there was something unusual in her port and gait. Perhaps she was less willowy, more rigid. She advanced with a master-

ful air as if to say: 'To-day there shall be no nonsense. I lead: you follow. You are mine to do as I please with. Until this afternoon I have indulged you as I might indulge a favourite young horse. I've let you just smell the halter and then go galloping off to the other end of the field. I've let you lead me a breathless dance through the buttercups and clover. But you have bucked and jibbed and bolted and neighed and tossed up your head and shaken out your mane and tail long enough. This time I mean to put the halter on. So let there be no mistake about it.'

Antonio observed all this and was thankful. So long as she chose to be peremptory, scornful, logical, he was safe. The encounter, though painful, would not be perilous. But let her once soften and he was lost. He felt that, even with the remains of yesterday's miraculous grace in his heart, he would be powerless against a tear or a sob. His two sleepless nights and the unwonted stress of romantic emotions were wearing him down, and he inwardly prayed that he might not be tempted beyond what he would bear.

When she reached the pool, Isabel did not cross the stepping-stones. Halting some distance from the brawling waterfall, and hardly waiting for Antonio to approach her, she began:

'We have had many long talks at this pool. To-day's talk will be short. Surely I have crawled to you enough on my hands and knees, and I will do it no more.'

Antonio said nothing.

'There's not an hour to lose,' she went on. 'If you and I are going to do the right thing, I must tell Mr Baxter to stop the packing at once. You jump! You turn pale. I suppose you're shocked to hear me call

the right thing. I can't help it. I must speak the truth. It is the right thing. And the opposite thing is not only wrong; it's wicked, it's blasphemous, it's a crime. No. Don't interrupt me. You needn't think we're going over all the old, old arguments again.'

'You have changed your mind rather swiftly,' said Antonio, refusing to be suppressed. 'Barely four hours ago you seemed to acquiesce in——'

'In my fate,' she said, with a bitter laugh. 'So I did. You worked on my feelings. Don't think me coarse and brutal; but I'll give you one illustration. You spread for me your cloak. Do you think I didn't see how old it was? When I thought of that, and of all the hardships you'd suffered, my heart broke and I cried and cried and cried like a baby. But I've changed my mind. I admire you as much as ever; but I don't admire the way you are going on. A man like you ought to have the best cloak in the world, and all the rest of the best things with it. You are a poet, you are a delicate gentleman. I see it every time you pour out a drop of wine or touch a flower. You would rejoice in exquisite things more than any woman.'

'Shall I offend you, Isabel?' he asked, colouring up, 'if I remind you that this talk is to be short? We are not getting on.'

'Yes, we are getting on fast,' she retorted. 'I say that I hate the way you are living. To save money and to buy back this place for the Benedictines is all very well; but I say that your sacrifices are overdone, and that God must be grieved by your excesses. He has shewn that you are not meant to be a monk. He has driven your brethren away, and instead of them he has sent you . . . *me*. No. I'm not conceited. I

don't think I'm wonderful. But I'm your destiny, and that's everything. You were not called to monasticism; you were called to *me*. That is, you were called to be a monk only to save you from the wrong woman, only until the appointed day should dawn for you and me to meet. It has dawned. Yes, Antonio, I can quote Scripture, and I don't quote it irreverently either. The day has dawned. And "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart." If you do, it will be a sin; just as I suppose it's a sin for a man to harden his heart against the call to be a monk.'

'No more of this, I pray,' cried Antonio. 'If there is some great new fact, let us have it; but let us not hark back to what we have threshed out already.'

'Very well,' she said. 'Here is the great new fact. My father. What did I tell you about him? I told you that his next experiment will kill him. But there's only one way of snatching him out of peril. Pardon me for telling you that this abbey is mine. It was bought with my money, and I am, to some extent, mistress of my father's movements in Portugal. If I flatly decline to leave here; if I pension off Mrs. Baxter; and if . . . if you do what is right by yourself and by me; then, and only then, will my father come down from the clouds and look facts in the face. If I go back to Lisbon, I go back to kill him.'

Deeply pained, Antonio raised a hand to stop her. She took a step forward and looked at him with steady eyes, but with trembling lips.

'Do you think, do you truly believe, that I would say a thing like this if it were not true?' she demanded in low, quivering tones. 'Oh, Antonio, I have always

known it. In your heart you despise me. You think I'm so far sunk in shamelessness that I am taking the name of God in vain and concocting lies about my father's life, so as to scare you into marrying me.'

'Before Heaven, Isabel, I think no such foul thought,' he answered solemnly. 'But I am puzzled. If this abbey is yours, not his; and if you are mistress of his movements; why not assert your authority without dragging in me? Why not pension off Mrs. Baxter and get a companion from England? Why not despatch a post to Lisbon to-night informing your father that you will be no party to his new scheme, and that you insist on his recruiting quietly here?'

'And you?' she demanded.

'I? No doubt we should meet sometimes.'

'No doubt, no doubt,' she echoed with scorching scorn. 'We should meet sometimes, and talk about the weather. You nearly make me hate you. Have you blood in your veins or water? Have you a heart in your breast or a cold stone? I tell you this is a crime, it is a blasphemy. You call it religion: I call it a black sin against God.'

Her terrible earnestness challenged Antonio to answer once and for all.

'Isabel,' he said sternly. 'Crime and blasphemy are hard words. You speak of God. I will speak of God too. If there is one thing I am sure of, it is that God has called me to live this life which I am living, and to do this work which I am doing. I am more sure of it than I am of these rocks under our feet. As for your father, God knows that I do not speak heartlessly; but your father's life is in God's hands, not mine. You can rid yourself of Mrs. Baxter and compel him

to rest in England without forcing me to break m
vows.'

'Your vows, your precious vows, always your vows
she cried, in anger and great contempt.

'Yes,' he retorted instantly, 'my vows, always m
vows. They are precious to me indeed, and I will be
you not to speak of them lightly.'

She faced him with increasing anger. But, befo
she could speak, Antonio suddenly repented himself
his sharpness.

'Isabel,' he said, in quieter tones. 'Think. Yo
despise me for keeping my vows. But suppose I ha
vowed my vows to *you*. And suppose I should brea
them, for some other woman. What then?'

'I would kill her. And you too.'

For a moment her wrathful excitement hindered h
logical perceptions; but as soon as she recognised h
meaning she cried:

'It's different, all different! I'm real; your Bri
isn't. Besides, She has deserted you. She's run awa
or She's dead. You are free.'

'No, Isabel,' he said. 'Think again. Suppose to-d
I should vow my vow to you. Suppose your fathe
or someone else, should pluck you suddenly from m
side so that I could never find you again. Nay, mo
Suppose you were untrue to me and that you abandon
me. Would you have me say: "She has gone. I sh
never see her again. To-morrow I will seek anoth
bride?" No, Isabel, no. If you say Yes, I shal
believe it. I know your soul too well. Even if y
broke yours, my vow would still be there, and y
would despise me for not keeping it. Am I right
wrong?'

He had unguardedly lowered his tones to a perilous tenderness and he was unconsciously gazing at her with the gaze she could never resist. Her lips lost their hardness and began to tremble, and her eyelids drooped over her eyes.

Antonio involuntarily recoiled from the danger. He knew in an instant that his fate was quivering in the balance. His heart had bled at every harsh word he spoke to her; and he knew that, to sweep away the last shaken ruins of his defences, she needed only to throw herself weeping into his arms. He knew that if she should once sob out, 'Antonio, Antonio, don't send me away,' his doom would then and there be sealed.

All this Antonio knew. But Isabel did not know it. His sudden movement of recoil stung her back into anger.

'Are you right or wrong?' she echoed bitterly. 'You're right, of course. You always are. Even when you're wrong fifty times over, you can argue yourself into the right. I call it cowardly.'

He exhaled a deep breath. The peril was past. Her scorn he could withstand.

'I have come to the end,' she cried. 'The very end. Listen. You are blighting my life, but I won't let you blight your own. Mark me well. This place is mine. These lands are mine. I have the right to go to-night and to set the whole abbey ablaze; and where will your work be then?'

The threat did not alarm him; but the cruelty of it, coming from such lips as hers, cut him to the marrow. He was on the point of retorting that the place was not hers at all, and that her father had deceived her on a wretched point of money. But her anguish was bitter

enough without this new mortification; so he held h
peace.

'I can make a bonfire of it this minute,' she went o
passionately. 'I hate it. How I should love to see
blaze! But I won't. And I won't sell this place. An
when I've left it on Thursday, I'll never come back t
you seek me on your knees. Never!'

Still Antonio held his peace. Isabel picked up h
little bag. But she did not turn immediately toward
home. She stood awaiting his final word. When
failed to come her indignation rose to its climax.

'No!' she cried. 'I've altered my mind. I will com
back. I foresee the end. You will never seek m
You hate me. But I will come back. You'll go o
slaving, slaving, starving, starving, praying, prayin
and breaking hearts in the name of God. But I wi
come back. You'll succeed. You'll regain the abbey
You'll fill it with monks. But remember. I will com
back. On the day of your triumph, I will be there.
isn't only you Southern people who love revenge.
will be there. I will come back!'

Antonio had been silently praying for sudden grac
in his own dire need; but he ceased to pray for himse
and prayed with all his soul for her. She turned to g

They stood facing one another as they had stood s
often during these two bitter days of their ordeal. Tr
as he would the monk could not conceal his agony o
holy love; and under the spell of his gaze the dev
of revengeful hate which had entered into Isabel ren
her poor heart and fled away. They looked at eac
other a long time. Then, in a breaking voice, she sai
softly:

'Antonio. I don't hate you. I love you. This is th

very last time. Do you send Isabel away? Is it true that I must go?'

With a sharp moan of anguish and with hands thrust out for mercy he gave his answer.

'For the love of Jesus Christ,' he cried, 'Go! And may the merciful God help us both!'

He closed his eyes in desperate prayer. But God and the Virgin Mother and the whole company of heaven seemed to have forsaken him. No light shone, no supernal fortitude came down. Instead of a vision of ministering angels, his mind's eyes saw only Isabel. Isabel, standing there. Isabel, weeping. Isabel, wounded to death by his cruel sword. Isabel, hoping against hope for his mercy. Isabel, his Isabel, rarer than gold, lovelier than the dawn, purer than snow, waiting to dart like a bird into the nest of his love.

He could fight no longer. Stepping one staggering step forward he held out his arms and opened his eyes.

She had vanished.

A moment later he caught sight of her pressing up the path above him. She was going swiftly, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left. Now and again a ray of the sinking sun shone upon her hair till she seemed a queen crowned or a saint glorified.

With all his heart Antonio yearned to leap after her, to capture her like a shy creature of the woods, and to bear her back in triumph, seated on his shoulder as she had sat after the thunderstorm. But his limbs refused to obey. His feet seemed to have been rooted for centuries in the granite. He could not move an inch.

Two cypresses, which they had often halted to admire, hid her from his sight. A groan which he could not stifle broke from the monk. There was one

more point in the path, one only, where she could re
appear. Would she turn round? Would she look back
As he waited, red-hot pincers seemed to be workin
and worming within him as if they would have hi
heart out of his body. He felt as if he were bleeding a
every pore.

She reappeared. She did not turn round. She di
not look back. She was gone.

BOOK VI

"ITE, MISSA EST"

I

Having charged José to place himself at the disposal of Mrs. Baxter, Antonio took the road for Villa Branca about an hour after sunrise. Utter weariness had brought a few hours' sleep to his eyelids; but he felt unrested and unrefreshed. By the time he reached Santa Iria fatigue compelled him to hire a horse.

While his mount was a-saddling the monk sat musing outside the wine-shop. What was Isabel doing? Of what was she thinking? Had she slept? Was she truly hating him at last? Would she come once more to the cascade?

In answer to this last question he could hardly restrain himself from leaping on the half-ready horse and galloping off like a whirlwind to her presence. At the moment of his leaving the farm-house, two hours before, this all-day expedition to Villa Branca had seemed the height of prudence; but he suddenly saw it as the depth of cowardice and brutality. She would come to the cascade in vain; and, later on, she would learn from José's lips how he had turned tail and run away. Antonio cringed and burned. A moment later, however, he knew that he had done right. She would not be at the cascade.

'To-morrow,' he said to himself, with a dull pain gnawing in his cold and heavy heart, 'I shall see her for the last time. She will make no sign. She will say

good-bye as if there has been nothing between
Blessed Mother of God, help us to the end!'

He took out Sir Percy's letter and perused it o
more to distract his thoughts. He read:

Dear Senhor da Rocha,—

*A post just to hand apprises me of your gentility to
daughter and her governess. The fact that I fully expe
such courteous behaviour on your part does not dimi
my gratitude in respect of it; and I beg you to believ
the sincerity of my regret that I shall be unable to pre
my acknowledgments in person.*

*I indulge the hope that a proposal which I am abou
make may not be unacceptable to you. From our mu
friend Mr. Austin Crowberry I learn that you wishe
purchase the abbey domain, but that your offers were
acceptable to the Minister of Finances.*

*I have paid a deposit of £500 to the chief of the Faze
at Villa Branca, and am engaged to pay £300 on
Year's Day and the balance (£2500) in five half-ye
instalments. As I have become closely associated wit
enterprise which will involve my residing alternately
Lisbon and London I should find it convenient to tra
to yourself my whole bargain as regards the abbey.
is to say, I forfeit the £500 already paid and leave yo
find £2800 on the dates above referred to. I also ask
acceptance of the larger articles of English furni
recently placed by me in the guest-house, and I have
structed Jackson, my man, to bring away personal lug
only.*

*As my movements are erratic, perhaps you will ind
me by completing the business with my agents, Me
Lemos Monteiro and Smithson, Rua do Carmo, Lis*

who have written to Villa Branca preparing the officials for your visit. Failing your approval I will make other arrangements; but, meanwhile, I beg that you will add to your unfailing kindness by taking care of the keys, and that you will believe me to be

Your obliged and obedient servant,
Percival Kaye-Templeman.

Once in the saddle, with the well-beloved music of horse-hoofs in his ears, Antonio found it easier to abstract his mind from bitter thoughts. He applied his whole brain to problems of finance. Two thousand five hundred pounds in two years and a half. At first it had staggered him; but he was going to take the risk. His own and José's hard cash hoardings would pay the New Year's Day instalment nearly twice over. By mortgaging the farm and the sea-sand vineyards and by pledging his personal credit he could pay the July five hundred and keep two or three hundred towards the instalment due the following January, making up the balance from the year's wine-sales. Fifteen hundred pounds would remain payable; and this sum he hoped to raise in due course by a bold stroke involving a mortgage on the abbey itself.

The chief of the Fazenda received his visitor effusively. This time the monk was not required to lean against a pile of stolen books. He sat in the chief's own chair and was offered wine of the chief's own stealing. As three hundred pounds of Isabel's money had stuck to the chief's fingers the great man was more than willing to accept Antonio in Sir Percy's place; for he had just learned that the Englishman would be unable to meet his obligations, and he was mortally afraid of a re-

opening of the transaction in Lisbon. He even threw out mysterious hints as to further concessions which might be arranged. Antonio listened attentively. His conscience allowed him to plan the outwitting of the Portuguese Government as regards money which was not honestly theirs. But as soon as he perceived that the official was bent on more pickings for himself the monk became obtuse. He was not willing to assist any man in the work of more completely damning his soul; and, although Antonio clearly foresaw that he was making an enemy and preparing sore troubles for himself in the future, he steadfastly held out against temptation.

The autumn day was drawing to its twilight when Antonio, having given up his horse at Santa Iria, trudged up the path to his own door. Half the way home Isabel had queened his whole mind. On leaving Villa Branca he had sought to preoccupy himself with the most complicated arithmetic; but, little by little, Isabel had reclaimed her empire. As he mounted the doorstep his heart thumped heavily. Had she written? Had she sent a message by José? Or, most terrible and beautiful possibility of all, would he find her sitting in the house, as in her rightful place?

He entered. There was no Isabel enlightening the dim and cheerless room. He hurried to the table whereon José was accustomed to leave the letters. There was nothing. His heart chilled and shrank. Still, there was to-morrow. Yes. He was certain to see her to-morrow.

José stamped in noisily and handed Antonio two keys.

'They have gone,' he said.

So sharp a blade of anguish pierced his soul that Antonio let the keys fall on the brick floor.

'Gone?' he echoed. 'Who? When? Why? Where?'

'The English senhoras,' answered José. 'They started about three o'clock, to Lisbon.'

Antonio sank down upon a coffer. He had used up the last of his strength in tramping from Santa Iria, and he had eaten nothing all day.

'I don't understand it very well,' continued José. 'I reached the guest-house at half-past eight. I thought they weren't to leave until to-morrow. I worked under the Senhor Jaxo. He didn't hurry himself at all. Joanninha brought us cold meat and white bread and strong wine. Joanninha is the cook. She has the longest tongue, your Worship, in Portugal. She made me angry, talking about your Worship.'

'About me? How?' asked Antonio. He felt sick and faint.

'She heard me say that your Worship would attend the senhoras to-morrow morning. She said: "Where is his Excellency to-day? I suppose he's gone to see Senhor Jorge's Margarida." I said: "No, his Worship has something better to do. He has gone to Villa Branca to mind his own business, and it would be a good thing if everybody else would do the same." There was an English servant in the room, called Ficha. She's maid to the Senhorita Isabel. Joanninha translated to her what I'd said, and they both laughed, and I was very angry.'

'What has this to do with the senhoras going away in such a hurry?' asked Antonio. But, even as he finished putting the question, his own fears supplied the answer.

'It's nothing to do with the senhoras hurrying away at all,' said José humbly. 'I beg your Worship's pardon for repeating such nonsense. All I know is that some bells rang and the Senhor Jaxo went out, and when he came back he was in a great rage. Joanninha told me that the Senhorita Isabel had decided to go to her illustrious father at once, and that nobody dared oppose her.'

'Did you see the senhoras? Were they well?'

'I think they were well, because I heard them quarrelling,' José answered. 'The dark senhora, the old one, has a temper that made me tremble, your Worship. They went away, the senhoras and the servants, in two old shut-up carriages, but they are going to hire a better carriage on the way. I saw the old senhora, when she handed me the keys. She sent you a long message, but I don't think Joanninha could translate it properly. So I asked would she write, but she didn't. They locked all up and gave me the keys. Then they went away. They didn't say when they will come back. I think, your Worship, that they are all mad.'

'José,' said his master, after a long silence, 'I have eaten nothing all day. Let me break my fast. Afterwards I have something to tell you. Prepare me what you can while I change my clothes.'

He climbed the steep and narrow stairs painfully. His cold tub revived him, and his old clothes gave him ease. But, as he lifted his worn cloak from its hook, the wound in his heart burst open afresh. He remembered how often Isabel had sat, in all her daintiness, upon that same cloak's clean but rusty folds; and how, on her own confession, she had 'cried and cried and cried like a baby' at the sight of its threadbareness.

By the time he descended José had grilled two small trout and was placing a bottle of good white wine upon the table. Antonio's heart was wrung anew at the thought of the simple fellow's unfailing devotion. Isabel had come and had gone; but José remained, loving and serving his strange master with a dumb love passing the love of women. The monk forced his faithful disciple to sit down at table with him and to take his fair share of the dainty fish and the animating wine. When they had finished eating and drinking he said:

'José, I have been a good deal in and about the guest-house and the abbey since we saved the azulejos, and many strange things have happened. The end of it all is this. Here are the keys of the guest-house. Upstairs, in the green box, I have all the keys of the abbey. To-day, as you know, I have been to Villa Branca. We are in legal possession of the abbey domain and everything in it. Within three years we must raise three thousand pounds. With God's help it can be done. The English people will never come back.'

He closed his eyes wearily. When he half-opened them he saw José, by the light of the one candle, bowing his head and silently repeating thankful prayers. The monk quailed. For himself, as well as for José, this ought to be a night of praise and rejoicing. Yet Antonio found it the darkest hour of his life. The abbey keys seemed no more than a few bits of metal. Or, if they were more than bits of metal, they were the keys of a prison, the keys which were locking Isabel outside his life.

He took his candle and went to bed. But, despite his weariness, he could not sleep. Where was she? In what rough inn, amidst what discomforts and indignities, was she lying? If he jumped up at once

and tramped southward until he could find a horse, when would he overtake her? To-morrow, he calculated about noon. He imagined himself thundering after her chariot, like a highwayman in a picture. He pictured her pretty alarm, her radiant joy, her gracious forgiveness, their ecstasy of reunion.

Suddenly the monk remembered with a shock that he had not said all his Office. Busy or idle, sick or well, glad or sad, he had never failed to recite it before. He still had None, Vespers, and Compline to say. Lighting the candle and opening his breviary he began to repeat the holy words. But he had not uttered half a dozen sentences before he shut the book with a snap.

Half an hour later he arose, put together all the keys and went downstairs. The new moon had not set and its brightness lured him forth from his narrow room into the peace of the night. As a matter of course he took the path to the abbey.

Although the ruts of wheels, her wheels, made him shiver he did not turn back. He opened the chapel with the long key she had so often handled, and sitting down in his old stall, he tried to say the rest of None but a white form, her form, hindered him, and a soft glad voice, her voice, cried: 'Antonio, Antonio Antonio—what a beautiful name!' He groped his way to his own cell, and he could almost see and hear her opening his cupboards. He hastened through the cloisters and escaped into the wood by the secret door.

Some dead leaves fled before him. Their tripping sound was no lighter than the fall of her elfin feet. The moon suddenly peeped at him through a clearing; and he saw her moon-white shoulders. The chirrup of a brimming brook struck upon his ear; and he seemed to

be carrying her once more in his arms while she murmured: 'Listen, Antonio, all the world is singing.'

He knew that the guest-house must tear his wound wide open, and that he ought to hurry home to the farm; but an irresistible influence drew him on. He reached the broad path. He stood under the casement whence she had flung the white rose. It was still ajar.

He turned the key in the lock and entered the ghostly and silent house. There was enough moonlight in the salon to shew him the blue ottoman whereon she had so often sat. He hurried out of the room with a heart ready to burst.

At the foot of the stairs he paused. They led to her chamber. Could he bear to cross its threshold, to lean out of the window as she had leaned out after the thunder, and to look at the bed where she had lain sobbing for his sake? He knew he could not bear it. But his intellect had ceased to govern him, and he ascended the stairs.

A broad moonbeam lit up every corner of her chamber. Like a man dazed he lurched to the window. There were the roses and there were the thorns. He turned to gaze at her couch. The fine linen had been taken away; but there was the place where she had lain, there was the pillow which her golden head had pressed. What had her last night been? Had she hated him or did she love him still? Had she cursed God or had she prayed?

For a moment his mind turned the question over in a numb, impersonal way. Then he came back with a rush to himself and, in a single moment, his chalice of agony welled up and brimmed over. He flung himself down on his knees and stretched out desperate hands and hungry arms across the narrow bed.

Although long minutes passed his dry-eyed, st
anguish remained. But at last his inward, spirit
man spoke. Was he committing a grievous sin? W
he breaking, in spirit, a vow which he was only keep
in the letter? Had he forsaken the Creator fo
creature?

Slowly, but very surely, his conscience framed
answer. No, he had not sinned. In all his desire
her there was still nothing of the carnal mind. He
racked and scorched by anguish, not because he
lost her love but because he had been forced to br
her heart by refusing her his own. She was a chil
poor lonely child with neither man nor woman to l
her, nor any God to console her; and he, Antonio,
flung her back into a still blacker frost and sha
famine, to pine and wither without love and with
faith. Yet, in all this, he had simply obeyed God.
had obeyed the God who commanded Abram to o
up Isaac, the God who 'spared not His own Son,
freely gave Him up for us all.'

The moonbeam softly faded from the chamber.
Antonio did not move. His weary limbs and exhau
brain could resist no longer; and, still kneeling aga
her pillow with his arms outstretched across her bed
fell asleep.

II

WHEN the monk awoke day was dawning. For a while memory failed him. But as soon as he understood that he was in Isabel's room he leapt up and hastened downstairs.

He knew that he ought to go straight home. But his feet, despite their soreness, turned towards the stepping-stones. He retraced the path by which she had left him, hardly thirty-six hours before. Past the cypresses, through the mimosas, he went; and before the sun rose he was standing in the icy spray of the thunderous waterfall. He longed to plunge into the crystal pool; but her invisible presence abashed him, and with an ever-sharpening pain he hurried away.

As he regained the farm, he found José burning some dead leaves. Why could he not tear down these clinging memories of Isabel from his heart, as José could tear down ivies from the trees, and fling them a-top of the glowing, fuming pyre? The gust of pale, acrid smoke which nipped his nostrils was bitter-sweet.

After a dip in the brook he drank some of the sham coffee and forced down a hunk of coarse bread. But when he faced his routine he found that he could neither work nor pray. The black and red letters in his breviary danced impishly before his eyes; and when he took up a pen to write out some accounts he marked the paper with more blots than figures. Both door and window

were wide open to the morning breeze; yet the roo
suffocated him.

At last a plan formed in Antonio's brain and he d
not delay its execution. Stuffing a piece of bread
his pocket he sought out José and said:

'To-morrow my hard work will begin. To-day I a
going to Navares. After to-night I will not leave yo
so much alone.'

He set out, striding northward with long stride
Every stride was a symbol of his renunciation; for
knew that by this time Isabel would have left her in
and that every moment was taking her farther south
ward to Lisbon. On he pressed. As landmark aft
landmark came in sight a flood of old memories dilute
his bitter potion of new-brewed sorrow. He live
over again the afternoon of his dusty march from th
monastery, amid a throng of monks and soldiers, an
the evening of his solitary return. But not for lon
An hour before the white houses of Navares shone
the morning sun Isabel had once more become the so
tenant of his mind.

The doors of the Navares corn-factor's granary
where the monks had held their council, were wide open
but Antonio did not pause to look inside. As on th
night of his flight, he hurried through the town and onl
rested when he came to the knoll where he had bivou
acked twice before. Thence, after munching a litt
bread, he took the short cut through the maize-field
to the village of the old cura; for the old cura's grav
was the goal of his hasty pilgrimage.

By an irony of fate a rustic wedding had draw
the whole population to the church and churchyard
Their mirth so mocked the pilgrim's mood that he ha

a mind to go away. But he mixed with the throngs until his resentment at their gaiety was turned to thankfulness for the excess of human joy over human sorrow. At last a horn was blown from the door of a neighbouring barn, and the crowd swept out of the churchyard like stampeding buffaloes.

The plain grave of the old cura lay in a sheltered corner on the north side of the chancel. Pious hands had brightened it with a yellow and purple nosegay that very morning. Antonio did not kneel down. He simply uncovered his head and strove to pray. For five minutes it was like chewing chaff. Some devil whispered in the monk's ear that his errand was not only silly, but in doubtful taste. The old cura was a saint, no doubt; but what had so rough a diamond to do with so soft and lustrous and exquisite a pearl as Isabel? Thus spake the devil, but Antonio refused his ear. Knowing that prayer comes with praying, he prayed on.

Not until he had replaced his hat on his head and was about to go were his prayers answered. But when the answer came, it was an answer indeed. It almost struck him down, like the great light which struck down Saul on the way to Damascus, and he was forced to lean against the church wall. It was an answer which both healed the worst of his grief and shewed him the most of his duty in a single flash. It thrust into his hand a golden key to the whole mystery of Isabel, past and future.

Like a man whose shoulders have suddenly been eased of a burden he swung out homewards, holding his head high. Without knowing it, he talked to himself aloud, uttering broken phrases of hope and thank-

fulness. Yes, he had found the key, the master-ke to all that had happened. As he strode along he recalle his association with Isabel fro[illegible] the beginning, an there was no lock his key did not fit.

Even the problem which had tried his faith mo sorely was solved. In confiding to him her story the mysterious influence which he had begun to exe cise over her four years before she saw his face, Isab had declared that their lives were interfused in a irresistible destiny. She had spoken of this as a fa more undeniable than the sun and moon. She evidentl believed with her whole soul that God's hand ha brought them together. Yet Antonio, all through h pleading, had remained more persuaded than ever tha the selfsame God had called him to the celibate lif And the apparent impossibility of reconciling these tw equally clear, equally honest convictions had kindle a fiery ordeal for the monk's faith. The only way ou of it seemed to be that all inward illumination was delusion—*totum corpus tenebrosum*, 'the whole bod full of darkness'—and that perhaps there was n Divine Enlightener at all. But this wonderful ne thought which had come to him at the old cura's grav explained everything. He thrust it into the mo complicated wards of his spiritual doubts, and it turne as smoothly as the damascened key was wont to tu in the lock of the chapel. The doors of Isabel's so rolled open before his eyes, and a bright light sho into the farthest cranny.

As for his duty to her in the present and in the futur he understood it no less certainly than he understoo her chaste love for him in the past. And, as soon this duty was plain, he made haste to begin doing it

for it was a duty of prayer, of specific, faithful, heroic, loving, unceasing prayer. He prayed as he walked, with increasing exultation.

So rapt was he by his holy work that Antonio hardly noticed the difference between the dusty, lonely road and the cobbled street of noisy Navares. He pressed southward without a pause. Was he not going home? After a day and a night of banishment had not the farm once more become the tranquil home of his body, and had not the chapel once more become the rapturous home of his soul? He strode the last long league of his homeward journey as if it had been the first; and when he met José at the gate his face was shining like an angel's.

True to his word, Antonio rose early the next morning and threw himself body and soul into hard work. Now that the abbey domain had come under his care, there were hundreds of things to be done. As the sunny and well-drained slopes were exceptionally suitable for the culture of a profitable amber-coloured wine, Antonio decided to double the area of the monks' old vineyard immediately. In order to effect this extension and to repair the damage done by seven years' neglect, it became necessary to engage nearly a score of helpers, half a dozen of whom would have to be retained in permanent employ. José, with one resident labourer, continued to live at the farm, while the monk quietly resumed occupation of his own cell in the monastery.

On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, Antonio dined at the farm with José; and on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, José dined with his master beside the stream in the monastery kitchen. At these week-

night meals, the conversation was usually a review o the day's operations and a debate as to the work of th morrow: but on Sundays, when dinner was eate ceremoniously in the guest-house, such topics were no mentioned and the talk was of the great world' doings as chronicled in Antonio's English paper, o Portugal's troubles, and, above all, of churchly an holy things.

Not only during these Sunday talks but also through out their work-a-day intercourse, José was conscious of a change in Antonio. Hitherto, the monk had simpl accepted the shaggy fellow's dumb affection; but, afte the day of his visit to the old cura's grave, he bega to show that he requited it as well. The last remain of his aloofness vanished, his speech grew gentler, an he became more watchful of José's health and comfor Nor was the monk's manner changed towards Jos alone. In all things and to all persons he was mor tender and less cold.

On the long winter evenings the two men busie themselves with blue pigments and white glazes unt they succeeded in fabricating tolerable copies of th two broken azulejos. When this was achieved the began a series of experiments with a view to distillin a new liqueur from eucalyptus. By rashly gulpin down a mouthful of the first pint, José almost burne out his tongue. Nevertheless, they persevered; an in the long run, the monkish talent for cordial-makin enabled Antonio to mollify the harshness of the fier elixir and to render it palatable. In January the shipped samples to agents in fever-cursed regions Spanish America and offered to supply the liqueur bulk at a high price.

Meanwhile, Antonio was waxing stronger in faith and hope and love. Every day he recited the whole of his Office in his old stall, sometimes with José's assistance, sometimes alone. He began also to hear Mass in the village church every Wednesday and Friday and to say the whole rosary every Sunday afternoon. In meditating on the fifteen Mysteries he habitually applied them to the case of Isabel; and, somehow, these thinkings never became trite or stale. In pursuance of his plan for Isabel's well-being he redoubled his prayers and offered half his Mass-hearings and communions with the same intention.

The winter passed and the spring came; and still he had not heard a word from her or about her. Sometimes a memory of her would suddenly overwhelm him. When he dined at the farm with José there seemed to be always three persons, not two, at the table. He felt that she was sitting at his right hand, where she had sat when he gave her the painted bowl; and so strong was his sense of her presence that he would often halt in the midst of a sentence, as if to ask her pardon for the dryness of the talk. After the morrow of her flight he never visited the stepping-stones, although he repeatedly gave José minute instructions for the conserving of the pool's beauties. As for Isabel's chamber, he locked it up and never re-entered it. Yet, in spite of this reverence for everything she had touched, he never moped or repined. He confided Isabel, as he had confided the fate of the abbey, to the might and love of God.

When July came he made a novena in honour of Saint Isabel, the holy queen of Portugal, whose silver shrine was the glory of the Poor Clares' great convent

opposite Coimbra, on the heights above the Monde
And in August he received a long letter from you
Crowberry. Seven of its eight pages were concern
with England's theological and ecclesiastical affai
but in the midst of the page devoted to personal matt
the young man had written :

*Of course, you know that Isabel has taken her fat
to live at Weymouth. I never see them ; but I hear t
are both well, and that Sir Percy has become quite reas
able and docile. Have they told you how she put her
down and sent away that Excellent Creature Mrs. Baxt
If Isabel hadn't pulled up Sir Percy I'm told he would h
died. By the way, what did you really and truly thin
Isabel ? Did you see much of her, or did she sulk ?
me when you write.*

Antonio wrote a long letter in reply ; but he did
tell young Crowberry what he really and truly thou
about Isabel, nor did he so much as mention her na
His novena was answered. It was enough for him
know that Sir Percy lived, and that she was well.

The grape-harvest in September was a good one,
it was only by cutting an hour from his sleep-time t
the monk could fill full his appointed measures of w
and prayer. Then came October, with its vintage
memories. On the anniversary of Senhor Jor
serão Antonio could be serene; for Margarida
just been happily married to a handsome and hon
able young man of Leiria, the son of a prosper
builder. But with the approach of the annivers
of his first meeting with Isabel he grew troubled ;
to divert his thoughts, he departed hurriedly for Lis

where he had business to transact with the shippers of his wines and cordials. In Lisbon he learned that a journey to England would be to his advantage. But England meant Isabel; so, on the anniversary of her flight from the guest-house, he turned his back on the capital and hastened home.

By mortgaging his farm the monk succeeded in paying the third instalment of the abbey's price. He faced the New Year with less than twenty pounds of ready money, and with the obligation to find five hundred by the first of July. A request for a more flexible arrangement was flung back at him by the Fazenda official with vindictive contempt. As the spring advanced, Antonio laid his plan for the immediate outright purchase of the abbey, on a fifteen hundred pound mortgage, before four separate persons; but without exception they either could not or would not entertain it. In these circumstances he felt bound to cut down his gifts to village charities and his bounties to the hangers-on of the countryside. As a result, José came home one day with a black eye, received while he was punishing three village loafers for calling the Senhor da Rocha a skin-flint and a miser.

By May-day Antonio's sales of stock and the pledging of his credit had brought him in only three hundred pounds, and there was nothing left that he could pawn without crippling himself hopelessly in the near future. But he was not cast down. He was doing his utmost, and he calmly left the rest with God.

III

VERY early one morning, at the end of May, Anton heard light footsteps passing his cell. Although h sprang up immediately from bed he could not ope his door in time to see the intruder's face or form. H caught no more than half a moment's glimpse of slender and darkly garbed figure disappearing roun the angle of the corridor.

Having scrambled into his clothes, he started pursuit. The light tap-tap of shod feet on the ston told him that his visitor was making for the chape The monk, who was barefooted, followed noise lessly.

Peeping into the chapel through the little door am the azulejos, Antonio saw a tall spare man kneelin before the altar. Even if his back had not been turne to Antonio it would have been impossible to see his fac because he was hiding it in his hands. The strang wore a long black cloak, uncomfortably thick and heav for the torrid Portuguese summer. But it was pla that he did not find it too warm. With long, thi death-pale hands, he drew its folds more closely roun his body; and, as he did so, the familiar moveme revealed his identity to Antonio.

It was Father Sebastian.

Antonio hurried forward and knelt at his side. B Sebastian did not move, nor did he cease praying f

four or five minutes; and when at last he turned towards Antonio it was without the slightest sign of surprise. Rising painfully, he left the altar and made a gesture, inviting Antonio to follow him.

As Sebastian had stood next to Antonio in juniority among the choir-monks, the stalls of the two men were side by side. Sebastian sat down in his old place and Antonio did likewise. The chapel was dim; but the younger man could see that the elder's body had wasted almost to a skeleton. Yet there was nothing repellent about him. The bloom on his cheeks and the fire in his eyes had the solemn beauty of a sunset in an autumnal forest. When he began to speak his voice was so soft and sweet that it seemed to come from some far-off holy height.

'To-day, Father Antonio,' he said, 'completes the ninth year since you sat on the cloister roof and heard the hoofs of the horsemen who had come to thrust us from this house. And, this morning, it is just nine years since you were raised to the priesthood. I asked our Lord to give me strength for the journey, so that I might spend this anniversary with you. He has heard me.'

'Who told you that I was here?' Antonio asked.

Sebastian did not reply. But there was that in his eyes which gave Antonio a sufficient answer. Here was a saint who walked in the light.

'Nine years,' mused Sebastian aloud. 'And you have not yet said your first Mass.'

'No,' replied Antonio. 'But God is good. Every year He enables me to send a little cask of wine for the altar to a poor church in England. Six days a week I work amid wine; and is not wine the matter of His

great Sacrament? It consoles me to know that althou
I cannot say Mass, I can serve His table. Althou
I cannot, like Mary his mother, bear Him in
hands, I can be like those other Marys at the sepulch
Emerunt aromata ut venientes ungerent Jesum: "Th
brought sweet spices that they might anoint Jesus."

'He is not a God of the dead, but of the living,' s
Sebastian, in sweet, far-off tones. 'We do not offe
dead Christ. Say rather that you are like that favour
unknown to whom He sent two disciples saying, *U*
est diversorium ubi pascha cum discipulis meis manduce
"Where is the guest-chamber where I may eat
Passover with My disciples?" But come. Our ti
together is short, and there is much to say. First of
I have brought your breviary which you charged me
keep.'

He pointed to a package lying on the Prior's s
Antonio rose and took it with joyful gratitude. Wh
he returned to his stall he said:

'Suffer my questions first. Whence do you com
Where have you lived these nine long years?'

'For a few months I was with the English fathers
Lisbon,' Sebastian answered. 'They were kind;
when it became plain that the Portuguese Benedict
congregation must come to an end, I crossed Spain
sought asylum at the Montserrat, where men used
believe the Holy Grail was treasured. There was m
work for me to do there in the School of Music;
I found strength to do it, for we lived like eagles h
up in the pure air, three thousand feet above the
But Madrid followed the example of Lisbon. Gre
eyes were cast on our possessions. They accused u
being Carlists, just as in Portugal they accused us

being Miguelistas: and only eighteen months after leaving this abbey, I was again an exile. Since then I have dwelt in three religious houses; and every one of them has been suppressed.'

'Can it be,' asked Antonio uneasily, 'that the Orders are themselves to blame, as men say? Here we dwelt in simplicity and piety, living by our own labour and feeding the poor. But was this house an exception? Had the majority of other monks indeed sunk into gluttony and sloth?'

'In every monastery from which I have been driven,' said Sebastian, 'our evictors poured regrets and compliments upon us. It was always the misdeeds of "others" for which we had to suffer. But whenever I questioned an exiled community, I found they had received the same compliments. Those mysterious "others" have still to be found. According to the statesmen, religious houses individually are fountains of light and blessing to their neighbours; but collectively they are a dark curse on the nations.'

'Unbelieving men are determined to mulct us of all we have,' said Antonio, 'and therefore they must needs invent crimes to suit our punishment. They hang us first and indict us afterwards.'

'They oppress us,' agreed Sebastian, 'in the great and sacred name of liberty. But the avarice of godless men is the mainspring of it all. I have seen five houses confiscated "for the good of the People"; and in not one case have the People received a third of the plunder. But enough of this. Tell me your own story.'

'Where is the Prior?'

'He is dead. He died in Belgium.'

'The Cellarer?'

'He is dead. He died in Brasil.'

'Father Isidoro?'

'He is dead. He died in Spain.'

With a sinking heart, Antonio named the choi monks one by one; and, after each name, Sebastia answered: 'He is dead.' Father Sebastian believe that Brother Cypriano was still alive; but, of th Fathers, only he and Antonio were left.

'*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,*' murmure Antonio.

'*Et lux perpetua luceat eis,*' Sebastian responded.

'To-morrow morning,' added Sebastian, 'will h the anniversary of the Abbot's last Mass. If our Lo will give me strength I shall say Mass at this altar onc more.'

After a pause, Antonio began to relate his histor from the moment of his quitting the council at Navare Every fact that threw light on his operations for regai ing the abbey he stated with precision. But he did no mention Margarida, and he referred to Isabel only Sir Percy's moneyed daughter. When he had finishe Sebastian looked at him with steadfast pitiful eyes an said:

'These have been great sacrifices and cruel hardship for the sake of our Lord, and they will not be in vai But you have not told me all. My brother, I feel tha you have kept silence concerning your most costl sacrifice, your bitterest ordeal. Why not tell m all?'

Antonio's pride rebelled. The desire to ease hi heart by pouring out its hoard of solitary grief wa strong; but his gentleman's instincts of reticenc were stronger. For some time he remained silent

But an inward voice sternly bade him speak; and he spoke.

He told the short tale of Margarida. Then he unfolded the whole case of Isabel, glossing over nothing. He scrupulously added an account of his actions and feelings on the night and morrow of her flight. When he had finished he sat with bowed head and waited for Sebastian's judgment. But Sebastian remained silent.

'You do not speak,' said Antonio. 'Perhaps I have given you the impression that my ordeal was carnal, and that this English maiden was a direct emissary of Satan. If you think so, I have spoken blunderingly indeed.'

'Satan exists and he is busy enough,' returned Sebastian. 'But in trying to find the cause of any strange thing that happens I have learned to think of Satan last. Nearly all our temptations arise from our own self-love and carelessness. Many other temptations are God's provings and perfectings of our spiritual mettle. Satan is not omnipresent and his angels are only a shrunken legion. But have patience. Let me think.'

He resumed his meditation. At last he turned and said:

'This was not a temptation from the devil. Neither did it spring from corruptness in your heart or in hers. I am persuaded that our Lord's work is somehow in it all. Perhaps you will never know in this world what work it is; but that is not your affair.'

'Sometimes,' said Antonio slowly, 'it troubles my conscience. As I told you just now, I didn't hold out to the very end. I gave way within my heart; but when I opened my eyes she had vanished.'

'You do wrong to be troubled,' said Sebasti
'You held out to the bitter end of the trial God h
appointed you. When you told this Isabel finally
go, she went. That was the end. All that happe
afterwards was mere reaction.'

'The next day,' persisted Antonio, 'I did not
my Office. My heart bled for her as it never b
for the Abbot, or for you, Sebastian, or for t
place.'

'It bled for her, not for yourself,' Sebastian explain
'In profane love, the lover who thinks he is griev
for the beloved is only grieving over his own loss
her, over his own short bereavement, or over his o
humiliation and discomfiture. With you, Antonio,
was not so. You did not wish to take; you wished
give.'

'Do not make me out a saint when I know I a
sinner,' said Antonio, almost sharply. 'If she
been old, and tart, and ugly, would my heart have b
for her all the same?'

'Perhaps not,' Sebastian retorted. 'But, if she
been old and ugly, neither would there have been m
virtue in giving her up. Do not complain of her beau
You had heroic work to do, and her beauty helped
to do it better. In England there are Puritans
would say that these azulejos and these gilded carvi
must hinder us from doing the Work of God.'

'I do not follow you,' said Antonio.

'Tell me,' Sebastian asked abruptly, 'how
stand with the payments you have bound yourself
make.'

Antonio drew from his breast an account over wh
he had pored and pored for a month without mak

the adverse balance a vintem less. Sebastian conned it attentively from beginning to end. Then he said:

'Follow me to my old cell and bring me paper and ink.'

He rose with so much difficulty that Antonio had to support him; but once fairly on his feet he moved quickly over the pavement. At the door of the cell Antonio left him; but before he had finished cutting a new quill and replenishing the sand-sprinkler in his own room, Sebastian rejoined him. Sitting down painfully at the tiny table he swiftly wrote a very short letter. Without reading it over he folded it, sealed it with a small brass seal which he drew from his pocket, and addressed it to a Spanish nobleman in a small town of the Asturias.

'Let this be despatched at once,' he said. 'There is no time to lose.'

'A post leaves Navares in three days,' replied Antonio. 'José shall take the letter there this morning.'

'It is well,' said Sebastian. 'And when this José returns, let me see him as soon as he is rested.'

The cell was brighter than the chapel, and Antonio perceived that his friend was become almost as insubstantial as a ghost. He called to mind a passage from a new English poet about a man who, having wasted to a shadow, was ready to be resumed into the Great Shadow, the shadow and blackness of death. But Sebastian seemed rather to be a pure white flame, waiting to be drawn into the Great Light.

'You have not broken your fast,' cried Antonio in shame and alarm. 'You must eat. I have good wine. You must rest. You must sleep. When the heat is over we will talk again, and you shall see José.'

'It has been meat and drink and rest and sleep t see you again, Father Antonio, and to hear what yo have told me,' the other answered. 'But you are right I must sleep. I will obey your orders.'

At breakfast Sebastian ate and drank nothing sav an ounce or two of bread and an egg beaten up in whit wine. When the meal was over he declined Antonio' pressing offer of a comfortable bed from the guest house, and lay down on the straw mattress in his ow cell. There he soon fell into so profound a sleep that h did not hear Antonio drenching the window wit bucketful after bucketful of water to counteract th blazing heat.

At night José, wearing his best coat and his mos diffident manner, dined with the two monks in a corne of the refectory. Sebastian, with bright eyes an glowing cheeks, did most of the talking. He praise the wine and the food, although he touched little o either; and throughout the repast he was full of a eager cheerfulness such as Antonio had never seen i him before. After dinner he drew from José an exac account of his mental and spiritual state: for Antonio had told him of the poor fellow's desire to become a monk.

'José,' he demanded, at the end of his questioning 'You have learnt Latin. Can you translate, *Irascimini et nolite peccare?*'

'I can, Father,' answered José proudly. 'It means, "Be angry and sin not."'

'So it does. You did well to be angry with the greedy and lazy good-for-nothings who spake evil of Father Antonio. But you did ill to thrash them and to come home with that black eye. Go on being angry with sin; but learn to love sinners.'

'Can't I be a monk, Father? May I not have the habit?' pleaded José, in consternation. 'I am glad I thrashed them; but I'm sure I shan't need to thrash them again.'

'The habit is a comfort and a help,' Sebastian replied, 'but we must not give it you to-night. Live as you have been living, in the love of our Lord and in obedience to Father Antonio. For the present you can wear no habit more acceptable to God than the coat in which you do your daily duty about the farm. Do not hang your head. I foresee that an abbot will once more rule within these walls, and that you, José, will die as one of his family. Have patience.'

A sudden change came over Sebastian as he ceased speaking. The hectic bloom faded from his cheeks, and the heavy lids drooped over his preternaturally bright eyes. A moment later he sank forward against the table. Antonio and José sprang at once to his help. He had swooned. They made haste to bear him bodily to his cell. It was an easy task; for beyond the weight of his cloak there seemed to be hardly anything to carry. After they had laid him on his bed and dashed water from the torrent in his face, he revived and said faintly:

'Thanks, thanks, thanks, I am well. Leave me. I shall say Mass to-morrow at five o'clock. Leave me.'

He fell into another unnatural sleep. But Antonio did not leave him. All through the short warm night he watched and prayed. At last the dull chaunt of the Atlantic was drowned under the glittering trills of near blackbirds. Day dawned. The sun rose above Sebastian's Spain; and the sleeper awoke.

He answered the traditional *Benedicamus Domin* with so ringing a *Deo gratias* that Antonio thought a miracle had happened. Sebastian looked stronger an healthier than ever before. Even José, who had bee sleeping heavily on the corridor floor, was aroused b Sebastian's two words.

They repaired to the chapel. There Father Sebastia heard the confessions of his two companions. Witho delay he proceeded to the sacristy. Antonio followe him and began to lift from its drawer one of the le costly vestments which had never been taken awa It was green and gold, as appointed in the Ordo f that day. But Sebastian, having bidden him repla it, drew forth a black chasuble, simply embroidere with a plain white cross. Antonio felt justly rebuke When the Abbot was dead, and the Prior and all t fathers save two, surely it was meet that the survivo Mass should be a Mass of requiem.

From his pocket-case, Sebastian took the uncons crated wafers which he had brought from Lisbon. finished his vesting and preparation and they re-enter the chapel. José was kneeling devoutly on the low step of the sanctuary. Outside, hundreds of birds we in full boisterous song.

Father Sebastian went to the foot of the altar a began to say Mass. He uttered the words quickly a clearly, and made the genuflections without difficul Indeed, Antonio, as he poured water over the white a fleshless fingers at the psalm *Lavabo*, marvelled m than ever at the miracle of his friend's sudden streng At the commemoration of the dead, the intensity Sebastian's recollection seemed to make the wh chapel thrill and throb, like a bed of reeds in a wind

After he had given the most holy Body to Antonio and to José, Sebastian concluded the Mass and returned to the sacristy with a firm tread. He laid aside the sacred vestments and came back to his old stall in order to make his thanksgiving. Antonio, also in his old stall, knelt at Sebastian's side.

The ascending sun cleared the top of the hill and shone into the chapel. The diadem of the Holy Child blazed with glory. In all the trees happy birds redoubled their songs.

Half an hour passed. José, arising noisily, made Antonio open his eyes. But Father Sebastian knelt, without moving, against the sloping book-board. José clattered out. Still Father Sebastian did not move. Antonio waited, revering his friend's ecstasy of communion with his Lord. He waited long. But meanwhile a broad sunbeam had been working westward; and at last it poured its burning gold upon the bended head.

Antonio was stepping softly forward to screen his friend from the fierce ray when a sudden instinct bade him kneel down and look into Sebastian's face. But Sebastian's wide-open, rapturous eyes did not gaze into Antonio's; nor were they beholding any earthly thing. So beautiful was the sight that Antonio's exclamation was more a shout of joy than a cry of fear. Into his mind there rushed the words of Isaias which had been Sebastian's favourite scripture in the old days, *Regem in decore suo videbunt oculi ejus:* "His eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land which is very far off."

Antonio and José buried the body of Sebastian that

night on the sunny side of the cloister, between th
third and fourth pillars, just under the tile-picture
Enos with its legend, *Ambulavit cum Deo et non a*
paruit, quia tulit eum Deus : "He walked with God an
was no more seen, for God took him."

IV

On the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, just thirty days after Sebastian's death, Antonio heard Mass in the village church. Forty-eight hours were left to him before his payment . the Villa Branca Fazenda became due. In the strong-box at home he had only three hundred and twelve pounds towards his debt of five hundred. Nothing had been received from Sebastian's friend in Spain, although sufficient time had elapsed for a reply to reach the farm. Nevertheless, Antonio rose from his knees at the end of Mass and took his way homeward with a serene spirit.

From the point where he and José had seen the ruts of young Crowberry's wheels nearly two years before, the monk heard thumping hoofs. He gazed down the road and saw an advancing cloud of dust. A few moments later he made out the milk-white Branco which had succeeded coal-black Negro as the Navares post-horse. Thomé, the postman, drew rein and handed Antonio two letters.

The first was from young Crowberry. It ran :

Dear Friend da Rocha.

You will be sorry to hear that my father died last week, suddenly. I know you will pray for him ; and I hope you will pray for me too.

Strange to say, Sir Percy also passed away last week two days after my father. I saw it in the papers, but know no details. At Christmas my father saw him a Weymouth, and he seemed well.

As our affairs are tangled, I have much to do. Writ to me soon. My thoughts turn to you very often nowadays Tell me how you do, all round. I remain, your sincer friend, *Edward Crowberry.*

The second letter contained a draft for two hundre pounds payable at sight in Navares. Antonio regarde it without emotion. Even the fact that it was un accompanied by a single line of writing from the sende did not stir him. He had fully expected that the mone would arrive in due time from somewhere, and it wa no surprise to find it in his hand. A single though filled every corner of his mind. Isabel was a thousan miles away, sunk in deepest sorrow, with none t comfort her.

Thomé slapped Branco's neck noisily so as to arou Antonio from his reverie and to remind him that th postage had not yet been paid. Although it was n the first time he had seen a man tear open a bulletin death at the roadside in the full blaze of noon, Thom was sympathetic. But business was business. In h turn every man had to die ; but meanwhile Thomé ha to live. Antonio took the hint and gave the man h money.

When José saw the draft, half an hour later, he far forgot a would-be monk's decorum as to execute rustic dance. The next minute, without being co scious of any incongruity, he said :

'Father, I knew this money would come. I knew

this morning, at Mass. What did the Introit say? *Nunc scio vere quia misit Dominus angelum suum, et eripuit me:* "Now I know verily that the Lord hath sent His angel and hath delivered me." I knew. *Deo gratias.*'

'*Deo gratias,*' echoed Antonio. But his eyes were dull and there was no ring of exultation in his tone. He arose and went to his cell; but she seemed to be there, opening the cupboards and searching sadly for what she could not find. He ascended to the roof of the cloister: but restlessness dragged him down again. Wandering out into the open-air his feet turned of themselves towards the guest-house. He meant to go no farther than the steps where she had said, 'Promise that I may see you again,' and where he had carried her like a child in his arms; but he soon opened the door and made his way to the salon. The sight of the blue ottoman quickly drove him out again, and he mounted the stairs until he stood outside her chamber. The little key was in his pocket, for he never allowed it to go out of his sight. He fumbled for it and touched it. But it seemed to burn him. He hurried down the stairs and out of the house.

Striding along the broad path he returned to the abbey and entered the chapel. As he sat down in his old place a sudden thought came to his help. This was the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the twenty-ninth of June; and on the eighth of July all Portugal would be celebrating the feast of Saint Isabel, Portugal's holy Queen. There was just time, neither a day too much nor a day too little, for the nine days of his novena. He clutched at the coincidence like a drowning man at a straw; and although in less perilous moments he might

have called it a straw indeed, he found in it a plank
buoy up his sinking soul.

There and then he began his nine days' pleading
the Saint's intercession. In deep humility he made
of a little ill-printed pamphlet, bought by José ye
before for a vintem at a village fair. Outside t
penny chap-book one saw a rough woodcut of
Holy Queen, with a crown on her brow and a sceptre
her hand. Inside one found a sequence of pious ex
cises for the novena, set forth in the simplest
shortest words of the vernacular. Antonio co
have extemporised more dignified prayers; but
believed in the communion of saints and chose
link himself with the child-like faith of the poor
humble.

On the last of June he tramped into Navares to c
the Spanish draft, and on the first of July he rode i
Villa Branca to pay away his money. All the way
and home, on both the days, he prayed. Every morn
of the nine he heard Mass at the village, and on th
mornings he communicated as well. He besou
José to pray for a special intention; and, break
through his reserve, he asked some of the village Sa
and Blessed Ones to do the same.

Meanwhile the work in vineyard and distillery
grown heavy. Throughout his novena he devoted
hours of the twenty-four to sleep and meals, fou
Mass, Office, and prayers, and all the rest to accou
keeping and manual labour. The resultant exhaus
of his bodily strength seemed to sharpen his spiri
senses. On the fourth day, as he and José were say
Lauds, Antonio could hardly resist the belief
Sebastian's voice was joining in the holy Work. W

Lauds were finished and he was busy among the vines, he decided that his overstrained nerves had been wrought upon by his knowledge that Sebastian's grave was only a few yards away, just outside the cloister doorway. The next morning, however, his inward ear seemed to hear afar off a vast babble of deep voices, as if all the generations of Saint Benedict's sons throughout thirteen hundred years were reciting Lauds together.

On the sixth and seventh and eighth mornings this mighty murmur of deep voices reverberated persistently in his ears, like the echoes of distant Niagaras and Atlantics. On the ninth morning, after his Mass and communion, he heard it again; but this time there was a difference. While he was beseeching the Isabel in heaven to pray for the Isabel on earth, an ineffable harmony filled the ears of his soul. Blending with the deep voices he heard voices that were high and sweet and clear, like woodbine and sweet honeysuckle and roses intertwining among the sturdy trunks and branches of an ancient forest. It was as if all the generations of Saint Benedict's daughters had added their songs to the songs of all Saint Benedict's sons.

The tide of harmony ebbed slowly away. But it left behind it a strange peace in Antonio's soul; even as the tides of ocean bathe the burning sands and leave them clean and cool. The peace which filled him passed his understanding, and he did not try to explain it. Rising up quietly, he gave the little book back to José and went about his work.

October came again; but this time Antonio did not run away. Until the Indian summer ended he was

quieter than usual; but he met its memories without bitterness. The door of Isabel's room was still kept locked; he still avoided the stepping-stones, and every night and morning he remembered her in his prayers; but she had receded from the foreground of his life.

November and December were crowded with money troubles. The sales of the farm and sea-sand wines increased every year, and there was a constant demand for the two liqueurs: but Antonio's customers soon perceived that he was not a hard man, and they imposed upon him by taking excessive credit. His business needed capital; but every development had to be paid for out of revenue. Worst of all, a further instalment of five hundred pounds fell due on New Year's Day.

There was young Crowberry; but, after what he had said about his father's confused affairs, the monk did not think it fair to ask him for a loan. There was also Sebastian's Asturian nobleman; but loyalty to his dead friend restrained Antonio from requesting the Spaniard's further help. In his difficulty he wrote to Senhor Castro and followed up the letter by presenting himself in person at the old Castro cellars in Oporto early in December.

Senhor Castro, who had grown old and liverish, did not want to be troubled. He admitted that Antonio's English journey had firmly established the Castro fortunes; but, although he was a rich man, he gave proofs that all his money was invested beyond immediate recall. In the long run, Antonio crossed the bridge of boats from Gaia empty-handed.

He searched for the cobbler, his old landlord; but

the whole family had gone to Brazil. Twice or thrice during his heart-wearing stay in the city he was cheered by the best of greetings in the worst of Portuguese from Gallegos to whom he had been kind nine years before. These Gallegos, however, did not help him to raise five hundred pounds. They were the Gallegos who had failed; for the Gallegos who had succeeded were all returned into Galicia with their savings.

A few days before Christmas the monk clinched a bad bargain with a small firm of so-called Anglo-Portuguese bankers, who were really common money-lenders in bankers' clothing. The head of the firm hailed from Hamburg and his partner was a Portuguese Jew. These plausible rascals agreed to lend Antonio a thousand pounds on unconscionable terms. Although the nominal interest was only seven per cent, one extra and another made it over twenty. For sending a clerk to attend the transfer at Villa Branca they required forty pounds, although his expenses could not exceed twelve. The conditions as to repayment were harsh. As security, the usurers required a first mortgage on the abbey, a second mortgage on the farm, a note of hand from Antonio, and a hold on the receipts from wine. The monk's heart sank as he signed the fatal parchment; but he espied the gleam in the Hamburg man's eye too late.

On New Year's Day, Antonio had a moment of brightness when the abbey passed finally out of the control of the Fazenda official; but he soon found that he had exchanged a whip for a scorpion. Before the moneylender's clerk returned to Oporto he confided vexatious instructions to the most unprincipled of the

Villa Branca attorneys, who rarely allowed a month pass thereafter without sending for Antonio on son frivolous pretext. Whenever this objectionable pers and his still more objectionable wife desired a Sund jaunt they drove over to the farm or the abbey, spongi on Antonio's hospitality and poking inquisitorial nos into everything. One day the pair brought two chars-bancs full of their kindred to celebrate the senhor birthday by a picnic at the stepping-stones; and wh Antonio very courteously begged that the good thin might be drunk and eaten in some other part of t domain, the attorney promptly became his acti enemy.

Years passed. In spite of a hundred obstacles t wines and liqueurs made steady progress, and Anton seemed to be within reach of his goal. Having grou out to the usurers nearly two thousand pounds in leg costs, interest, and repayment of principal, he ow them less than two hundred. A debt on his farm st remained; but the Navares mortgagee was a reasonab man who was willing to wait. The monk reckoned th one more prosperous year would release him from t moneylenders' clutches and that, two years later, bo the farm and the abbey would be his.

But Portugal's honest, hardworking men and wom were once more being brought to the brink of ruin b the politicians. The minister Costa Cabral, havi been created Count of Thomar, sought to repay Que Maria da Gloria by measures of excessive royalism and immediately all the turbulent spirits in the count were let loose. Some rough-and-ready poet dash down a Portuguese Marseillaise, in which an imagina 'Mary of the Fountain' was hymned as a Joan of A

raised up to save the fatherland. In Villa Branca and Navares, Antonio often heard the lads singing :

Maria of the Fountain
  Has a sword in her hand,
To slay the false Cabrals,
  The traitors to their land.

Forward ! brothers, forward !
  Forward ! be our cry ;
On ! for holy Freedom
  To conquer or to die.

Suddenly the Septembrists took arms. Under the Viscount Sá da Bandeira there broke out the insurrection called by some the Mob-war and by others the war of Maria da Fonte. Cabral fell, and the Marshal Saldanha filled his place. To end the bloodshed and disorder foreign Powers intervened.

On the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, exactly four years after Antonio began his memorable novena to Saint Isabel, the Convention of Granada was signed and a general amnesty was declared. The good news reached the farm on Saint Isabel's day, and Antonio hoped against hope that the dates were good omens. But within two years Cabral was once more in power ; and, two years later, Saldanha and his soldiers once more turned him out.

One morning Thomé and Branco, both grown old, brought a letter to announce the bankruptcy of the Lisbon shippers to whom Antonio had entrusted the collection of his accounts. The news came barely a week before a further payment of one hundred pounds fell due to the moneylenders. Antonio immediately

hired a fast horse and hastened to Oporto. In answ
to his request, the Jew and the German blandly offer
to renew his bonds on terms so outrageous that t
monk walked out of their office. But only three da
remained, of which one was a holiday. He call
at Senhor Castro's house to find the master dead.

On the face of it, to raise a sum of two hundr
pounds on property worth three thousand was
absurdly easy task, and Antonio counted on being ab
to wash his hands of the moneylenders within twent
four hours. But owing to the political unrest an acu
financial crisis prevailed in Oporto. Money was scar
and lenders were shy. Antonio's security was scores
leagues away, and there was no time to inspect it; n
could the title be easily investigated, as the deeds we
in the moneylenders' hands.

On his last day of grace the monk presented hims
again at the so-called bank and stated that he wou
accept the hard terms offered. He was received with
volley of abuse.

'What?' roared Senhor Neumann. 'You have t
impudence to come here again? After all our kindn
the other day, what did we get? Nothing but ingra
tude and insults. Get out. We're sick of the wh
business. I'm determined to be done with it on
for all. If you've brought our money, pay it and do
argue. If not, we foreclose the mortgage, and I sh
write to Villa Branca to-night.'

'You are quite right, Neumann,' said Senhor Mu
'We were talked to like dirt. Senhor da Rocha cou
not have turned his back on us more offensively if
had been downright extortioners or common mon
lenders. But don't be too hard on a man in a hole.'

'I shall write to Villa Branca to-night,' persisted the German. 'I like business to be pleasant. What did the Senhor come here for at all, if he didn't mean to be straightforward? I like business to end as pleasantly as it begins. I like dealing with gentlemen.'

Antonio bit his tongue. Senhor Mual spoke again; and once more Senhor Neumann retorted. At last their trite play-acting came to its usual end with the German loudly exclaiming:

'Very well, very well, have your way. We're a brace of soft-hearted old fools. Every scamp that comes along can get round us; it'll serve us right if we both die in the Misericordia.'

Antonio signed fresh papers and hurried back to José. He spent three days writing English and Spanish and Portuguese letters to his customers in the Americas, unfolding new offers of discounts and a proposal for cash-payments against bills of lading. The result was the loss of half his Latin patrons, whose business could only be conducted on credit. Concurrently with these disasters the Lisbon Government kept on demanding larger and larger taxes; and Antonio never caught sight of the old white horse Branco without a shrinking of heart.

The monk fought on. To save a pound or two a year he gave up his English papers. But crisis followed crisis, and before long he owed Neumann and Mual almost as much as he had borrowed from them in the first instance. The two scoundrels played with him like anglers playing a pike. Sometimes they gave him so much line that he seemed to be regaining the deep broad flood of freedom. For a year at a time their letters would be friendly and the Villa Branca persecu-

tion would cease; but whenever the debt fell belo three hundred pounds they struck sharply and bega winding the firmly hooked fish pitilessly back to th bank. They knew how to enmesh him in widespre nets of petty litigation; and, although Antonio w far cleverer than the attorney, his cleverness availe him nothing. The affidavits of his opponents we invariably perjurious, but the monk scorned to swe falsely in reply, even on the most trifling point. Ha he possessed money to carry appeals into the high courts he might have obtained justice; but he nev succeeded in going further than the Villa Branca cou of first instance, where local corruption smiled at th maxim that Truth is mighty and must prevail.

Throughout these trials Antonio . nstantly advance in the love of God and his neighbour. Although h could not give money, he gave is time and strengt and knowledge to the help of the weak and harasse around him. A new cura came to the village, wh soon discerned the spirituality of his mysterio parishioner and insisted on his enjoying the gre consolation of serving at Mass. Meanwhile the mon kept up the daily recitation of the Divine Office in h old stall. Very often he was cheered by hearing aga with his inward ear the vast, sweet chant of all Sai Benedict's sons and daughters. In spite of his troubl he was nearly always cheerful; and he would oft echo the words of Saint Paul and say, *In omnib tribulationem patimus:* 'We suffer trouble on eve side, but we are not in anguish, we are perplexe but not in despair, we suffer persecution, but w are not forsaken, we are cast down, but we are n destroyed.'

One morning, when he was dressing for an iniquitous law-suit, Antonio noticed that his hair at the temples had begun to turn grey. The next moment he remembered that it was the eve of his birthday, and that on the morrow he would be fifty years old.

V

Late one December night, as he lay in his lonely cell, a furious gale aroused Antonio from sleep. Something was groaning and creaking outside. He sat bolt upright and listened until he became certain that the great iron cross which formed the finial to the chapel roof had worked loose.

The monk sprang up and ran out into the rain. Scaling the chapel wall by means of a swaying ladder, he found to his dismay that the cross was within an ace of falling. There was no time to run down to the farm for help, nor even to return to the abbey for tools. The only action that could avail was to stand with his whole weight on the last ridge-stone and to hold up the cross against the wind with his whole strength.

Antonio took the cross in his arms. The sou'-wester, roaring like a thousand lions, thrashed him with stinging thongs of cold rain and did its best to hurl him down, cross and all. But he held on. Time after time the ridge shook like a bog under his feet, and the great finial tugged at his arms like a captured beast striving to escape. His hands bled through gripping the sharp edges of the iron. Once or twice, during the first half-hour, he was on the point of relaxing his grasp; but a great thought put endurance into his heart and strength into his arms. He thought of his Lord, cleaving to the cross on Calvary with an intensity of love which fastened

Him there more securely than the iron nails. He thought of the darkness which was over all the land from the sixth to the ninth hour. Hitherto the monk had thought of that darkness as a mere absence of light; but, as he clung to the iron, with the brutal tempest howling and roaring and screaming, with the roofs and the trees whining and moaning, and with the icy darts of rain wounding him like thorns, he understood that it was a darkness reeling with all the sin of the world and envenomed with the hot panting of all hell's devils. With blood on both his hands and pains like red-hot needles in both his feet Antonio thanked God for this livelier sense of his Saviour's passion, and he repeated the words of Saint Paul, *Mortificationem Jesu in corpore nostro circumferentes:* 'Bearing about in our bodies the dying of Jesus.'

Towards dawn, when the world seemed to be rocking under him and he was ready to faint, Antonio recalled that other night of storm when, in the chapel below, Isabel had nestled in his arms. Her presence seemed to be with him once more. It was as though her white slender hands were helping his to uphold the thick black iron, and as though her soft, sweet tones were murmuring encouragement in his ear. The gale and the rain bellowed and spat, but Isabel's voice softly drowned their din. *Erat cum bestiis, et angelus ministrabat illi:* 'He was among wild beasts, and an angel ministered unto him.'

José, hurrying to the abbey before sunrise to report serious damage among the sea-sand vines, arrived just in time to save both the cross and his master. Having driven in a wedge, he made haste to help Antonio down and to coax him into bed. To bed the monk went; and

in bed he remained for a week, consumed by fever and tortured by nightmares. He seemed to be holding the lockless, boltless door of the chapel against the two usurers and the chief of the Fazenda and the Villa Branca attorney. He, Antonio, was holding it shut by fiercely pressing knees and thighs and arms and hands and shoulders and brow against the oak while his enemies charged at it like roaring waves at a cliff.

When the monk arose from bed his magnificent health was gone. He suffered from headaches, and could no longer walk to the neighbouring towns or do much manual labour. To employ his enforced leisure he advertised himself in two or three English and French papers as a private tutor wishing to receive one or two boarder-pupils for instruction in the classics, modern languages, and commercial routine; but there was no response.

Happily this illness befell during one of Antonio's periods of relief from the usurers' persecution. He knew, however, that such calms always heralded storms; and therefore he determined to use what health and strength remained to him in a grand effort to break out of the usurers' power. His debt, or rather their claim, stood at about nine hundred pounds. By selling the mortgaged farm and sea-sand vineyards, and also the whole plant, stock, and good-will of the wine and liqueur business as a going concern, Antonio could pay off the nine hundred and turn his back on Neuman and Mual for ever. In the event of local lenders clamouring for the liquidation of the floating debts which he had incurred on the strength of his personal credit, he would be able to satisfy them by mortgaging the abbey timber and part of the domain with a Navares mort-

gagee. Then, although his health was enfeebled and José was no longer young, he would set himself to the task of clearing off the last debts by branding his amber-coloured wine and pushing it in England.

Although so many miracles had been vouchsafed to him, both in his spiritual and in his temporal affairs, Antonio continued to employ all his energy and prudence. He maintained his old policy of doing the best he could and leaving the rest to God; but, until he had done his utmost, he would have felt it irreverent to expect a miracle. He would plan his campaign and dispose his forces and post his safeguards as if everything depended on his own arm and his own brain; and then, but only then, he would fall down in deepest humility and demand the divine help as if everything depended upon God. Accordingly he went about his new operations with so much circumspection that it was high summer before he saw his way to act decisively.

A payment of two hundred pounds to the usurers was almost due. It was payable through the Villa Branca attorney. Antonio had over a hundred in notes at the abbey, and he reckoned that the foreign drafts in the hands of his banker at Navares would yield at least a hundred and twenty more. As travelling fatigued him, he made up his mind to combine the Navares and Villa Branca journeys in one. At Navares he would cash his drafts and open his negotiations for the sale of the farm and the wine-business; and thence he would ride over the hills to Villa Branca and pay away his two hundred.

There was no hitch at the Navares bank. The drafts realised one hundred and thirty-one pounds. With a

thankful heart Antonio placed the paper money in his pocket-book and stowed it safely away in his belt of English leather. But before he was ready to go two men pushed the door open and strode hastily to the counter.

'It has come?' demanded the elder.

'No. Nothing,' said the banker. 'But I expect another post to-night.'

The younger man staggered back as if he had been struck. As soon as he turned Antonio knew him. He was Margarida's brother, Luis. Senhor Jorge had been dead two years, and Luis was the head of the house. The elder man Antonio recognised as Margarida's husband, the builder's son from Leiria, who had set up business on his own account in Navares. Not wishing to intrude into their trouble, the monk tried to slip out unobserved. But Luis saw his face and hurried towards him with a cry of joy.

'It is the Senhor da Rocha,' he cried. 'Theophilo, you are saved.'

'We shall see,' said Theophilo quietly.

'Let us go to the Campo,' suggested Antonio. 'There we can talk quietly.'

They walked along the shady side of the street until they came to the deserted public garden. Under an old lime-tree they sat down, beside a plashing fountain, and the monk waited for the others to speak.

'It is a matter of money,' stinted Theophilo, 'and it is not with my consent that Luis troubles your Worship about it.'

'Before my father died,' Luis began, 'he called me to him and said: "Luis, you and your brothers and sister have health and a little wealth, but I can't ex-

pect that you won't have troubles. When troubles come, be men and fight them as I have fought mine. But, if ever they are too strong for you, go to Manoel da Rocha up at the old abbey. We have seen little of him, through a misunderstanding that was no fault of his; but I know his worth. Tell him your trouble and he will help you out." Those were my father's very words; and that's why I stopped your Worship at the bank.'

'Your father was one of the best men I ever met,' said Antonio. 'May he rest in peace. Tell me your trial; and if I can help you I will.'

'It is not easy to tell,' faltered Luis. 'If we cannot raise a conto of reis by three o'clock Theophilo must go to prison. My mother and Margarida will die of disgrace.'

'Luis has not told your Worship,' broke in Theophilo proudly, 'that if I go to prison I go for another's crime. Before God, I am innocent. In an accursed hour I became the friend of Victor Sequeira, the treasurer to the municipal council. When I began business he lent me a few milreis. Last year he persuaded me to endorse some bills. He swore it was a matter of form. The bills have been protested, and I am responsible. On Monday I found that Sequeira ran away last week and that the bills were fraudulent, and that I cannot clear myself of complicity in the swindle. For my wife's sake they gave me four days to find the money. The time expires at three o'clock. We have pledged everything; but we still need a conto of reis. That is the tale. Luis has made me tell it. We have no right to expect that your Worship is interested in such a miserable affair.'

'I am interested, I am grieved most deeply,' said

Antonio, in great agitation. 'I know what it is to suffer terribly through signing papers in a hurry. But . . . a conto of reis! Two hundred and twenty English pounds!'

'It is a great sum,' answered Luis simply. 'But if your Worship had it, he would lend us the money. It is only for a few hours. The bank expects a post to-night. Theophilo has written to his father, and the money will come.'

'Senhor Theophilo,' said Antonio, who had become very pale, 'at this moment I have two hundred and thirty-eight pounds in my belt. I meant to sleep here to-night, at the hospedaria, and to go on Saturday to pay the money away at Villa Branca. To settle my debt there is more than life or death to me.'

Theophilo curled his lip.

'Your Worship is scornful,' added Antonio. 'If your Worship were not too well-bred he would say that I am telling a tale such as men nearly always tell when they are asked for a loan of money. No doubt Luis here partly thinks the same. Everybody in the village knows that I make a great deal of money and that I spend no more than a peasant. Everybody knows that I'm called the abbey miser and that I give away hardly a pound a year.'

They remained silent.

'But everybody doesn't know,' the monk continued, 'that for more than fifteen years I have been in the grip of Oporto money-lenders. Everybody doesn't know that I have paid thousands of pounds—yes, thousands—in costs and interest, and that I still owe nearly as much as the original loan. I was going to Villa Branca to pay them nearly a conto of reis, and I had set my whole

heart on getting out of their power. If I must renew this part of the debt it will be on ruinous terms, and I have no longer the health to go on fighting.'

'I have stated already,' declared the proud Theophilo, 'that Luis has troubled your Worship without my consent. If I must go to prison . . . well, to prison I must go, as better men have gone before me.'

'Not so fast,' said the monk. 'Humanly speaking, is it certain your father will send the funds? Have you recent knowledge of his financial position? Can he disengage money from his business at such short notice? If I let you have the use of my conto of reis till to-morrow night, is there a risk of my losing it?'

'None!' cried Luis. But Theophilo, having reflected, said:

'I thank the Senhor. I shall not trouble him. There is a risk. An Englishman, from one of their great cities called Scotland, is contractor for works at Figueira da Foz. He has farmed out his contract to my father, and he is treating him unfairly. Your Worship, there is a risk.'

Antonio sat staring at the fountain. In spite of the great heat he felt cold. At three o'clock Senhor Jorge's son-in-law and Margarida's husband must be thrown into a felon's prison for a crime not his own, in default of one conto of reis. And he, Antonio, had a conto of reis in his belt. By lending this proud and honest man the money he could perform a work of mercy which would pluck six men and women out of an inferno of despair and raise them to a paradise of thankfulness.

But there was a risk, a grave risk. Judging by his experience of Portuguese mercantile concerns, Antonio could indulge only a faint hope of Theophilo's receiving

the money from Leiria before it was due at Villa Branca. And in that event——

The Navares clock struck two. Theophilo sprang to his feet.

'Adeus, Senhor,' he said, 'and thanks.'

'No!' cried Antonio, plunging after him and gripping his arm. 'I have not refused. An hour remains. Give me thirty minutes. This is a terrible affair. Stay here. In half an hour I will return.'

Without awaiting an answer he hurried away. Quitting the Alameda by a side gate, he dived into a sunless alley and pushed at the door of the church of the Santa Cruz. It swung inwards. He hastened along the broad nave until he came to the brazen grille which barred the chapel of the Santissimo. There he sank down on the plank floor and, stretching despairing hands to the Presence on the altar, he cried out in agony, *Domine, quid me vis facere:* 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'

The answer came swiftly. It was as though a voice, a strong Man's voice, yet a voice even sweeter than Isabel's, said in his ear:

'Antonio, lend Theophilo your conto of reis.'

Of all the supernal voices which had ever spoken to him, this was the nearest and the clearest. If the brazen grille had opened and an angel had come forth proclaiming it with the voice of a trumpet, Antonio could not have been more sure that his Lord was bidding him lend Theophilo the money. Yet he could not, all in a moment, accept the answer. Horror, kindling almost to anger, filled his soul.

So this was to be the end. For fifteen years he had been slaving to fill the pockets of infamous extortioners;

and now he was to take the price of freedom and pay it away to replace the plunderings of a runaway swindler. A hideous thought, more foul and hideous than the blankest atheism, rushed into his mind. It was a thought about God. That God existed Antonio could not doubt; nor could he question that God intervened, as the Christians believed, in men's and women's lives. The Christians said that He was all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving. But perhaps the truth was, after all, that He was all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-mocking.

Antonio could grant that a work of mercy to men should take precedence of a work of praise towards God. But if God had intended him for works of mercy, why had He called him into a contemplative Order, and why had He suffered him to go on finding a dozen contos for usurers while he was refusing pence to honest men? And Isabel, his breaking of the heart of Isabel—how did that supreme deed fit into the sorry scheme? Yes, God had mocked him. He had made the world, and all the men and women in it, as a puppet-show to divert His eternal boredom. He had sat lounging on the arch of heaven for five-and-twenty years watching his, Antonio's, toil and strife just as a lazy lout lolls on the grass watching ants working hour after hour at the ant-hill which he intends to kick to pieces before he goes home.

The monk did not deliberately think these thoughts. They swept thunderously over him like a tidal wave drowning a lowland coast. For a moment they roared in his ears and took away his wits. But as he came to the surface he rallied all the forces of his soul and struck out desperately to regain his rock of faith. God was

no mocker. He was Love, all Love; and the thick blackness of this new and dreadful ordeal was only a shadow cast by the eternal Light. Nevertheless, Antonio all but failed to resist the sucking undertow of fresh doubts and to maintain his foothold amidst the battering surf of despair.

Close beside him, on an altar to the right of the grille, rose a statue of the Blessed Virgin, crowned with a golden crown and robed in the blue velvet robe of an eighteenth-century Portuguese princess. To her Antonio cried out for help. When words of his own refused to come he poured forth the words of Saint Bernard's prayer *Memorare*. For a prolonged while no help came, and he crouched on the planks, shrinking from the heavy stripes which God had appointed him. He remembered the ruined abbeys of England. Doubtless stronger and wiser men than he had laboured to restore them to the Church and to her Orders; but three hundred years had passed, and so far as Antonio knew, not one monastic house had been rebuilt upon the old foundations. Perhaps it was the divine will that the Orders, renouncing the world, should never be too long rooted in this acre or that; and perhaps it was ordained that they must renew their vows to the Lady Poverty in hovels and barns and caves. But, in that case, why had God bidden him waste his life in separation from the exiled brethren of his Order? He gazed through the grille as if he would demand the answer. But the ears of his soul heard no word save:

'Antonio, lend Theophilo your conto of reis. Antonio, lend Theophilo your conto of reis.'

Not yet could he submit. The smouldering rebellion in his heart was quickening for a burst of flame. At

last his eyes rested on the faded gilt legend running along the pedestal of the Virgin's blue-robed image, *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.' To Antonio this brief scripture recalled more than the pearly moment when the Virgin of virgins, despising the evil tongues of men and looking steadfastly into the deep, dark eyes of sorrow, surrendered herself to the will of God; for it recalled also the fiery hour when he himself, in the same words, had finally accepted the monastic life. With the memory of old battles and old victories there rushed upon him new graces.

'*Ecce servus Domini*,' he cried in sudden triumph, '*fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum!*' And, having prostrated himself with loving reverence before his Master, he rose up and sped back to the Campo, where Theophilo was striding up and down.

'Senhor Theophilo,' said the monk, 'I will lend you my conto of reis.'

Theophilo stared at him in amazement. So sure had he felt of Antonio's refusal that he would not have remained in the Campo had there been any other quiet and open place wherein to spend his last hour of freedom. He resisted; flushed; seized the monk's hand and dropped it the same moment; and at last began to stammer incoherent protests and thanks.

'But I will lend it,' continued Antonio, 'only on one condition.'

'On any condition you like,' cried Theophilo, beside himself with joy. 'If it's a hundred per cent, I don't mind. I'll work like a slave to pay back every vintem, and still I shall be your Excellency's debtor.'

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

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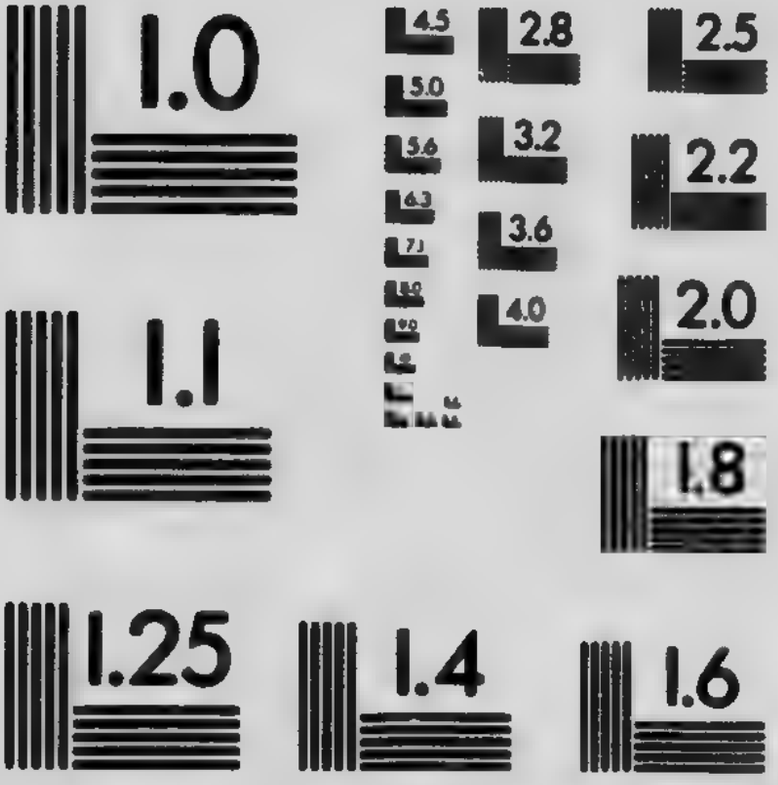

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"I ask harder terms than a hundred per cent,' ex
plained the monk quietly. 'My condition is this
Pledge me your word that if your father's money doe
not come in time to settle my own debt in Villa Branc
you will never reproach yourself on my account. Pro
mise that you will believe me when I say that, althoug
I shall be happier to-morrow night with your father'
conto of reis, I shall not be miserable without it. Pro
mise to believe that, if your father fails us, I shall hav
no grievance against him or against Luis or agains
you.'

Theophilo could only stand stock still, staring an
breathing hard. The clock struck half-past two.

'Quick!' urged Antonio. 'There's no time to los
See, here is the conto of reis. Pledge me your word tha
you will obey my condition, and the money is yours.'

'Your Worship cannot mean this,' broke in Lui
He had leaned against Antonio expecting to find him
broken reed, and he could hardly believe that this oa
like sturdiness was not a delusion.

'I mean every word,' Antonio answered. 'Com
take the money. I trust you to remember the terms

He drew a few notes from the pocket-book an
pressed all the rest into Theophilo's hand. The youn
builder clutched them eagerly; but a moment later h
sought to thrust them back.

'No,' he groaned, 'I cannot, I must not. My fathe
will fail me and you will curse us!'

'Come,' answered Antonio gently. 'I will tell yo
a secret. I have a Friend. While you sat by this fou
tain I went and asked His advice. I have asked
many and many a time, and He has never misled m
yet. He told me to lend you this conto of reis. If th

post does not bring a conto in its place, do not grieve. It is between my Friend and me. Go.'

They looked at him wonderingly; but he hastened away. From the far side of the garden he saw them stand a whole minute irresolute. Then Luis seized Theophilo's arm and they walked off quickly into the town. As for Antonio, he returned to the church of Santa Cruz, and there, in a corner, he began to say his Office. He recited it without rapture, but with a quietness of mind which was better than ecstasy.

Towards four o'clock two men entered the nave and knelt before the brazen grille. They did not discover Antonio; but, from his obscure corner, he could see their faces as they rose from their knees, and he knew that they had guessed Who was his Friend.

VI

THE post arrived at six o'clock; but it brought no letter from Theophilo's father. Luis, with a pale face, came to the hospedaria after dinner and broke the news falteringly. Glancing through the window, Antonio saw Theophilo pacing up and down outside. The monk put on his hat and walked into the street.

'Senhor, this is terrible,' moaned Theophilo. 'There is nothing.'

'It is terrible indeed,' answered Antonio, smiling. 'At half-past two you make me a promise, and at half-past six you break it. Come, remember. Cheer up.'

They walked beside him with downcast eyes.

'Come,' he said again. 'This will never do. Tell me. Does Donna Margarida know what you have been passing through?'

'Thank God, she does not, and she never shall!' cried Theophilo.

'Very well. Let us go to your home and hear some music and be gay. I'm a country booby, and when I visit the town I want to see some life. It is dull in the inn.'

Theophilo became voluble in apologies for his negligence. He despatched one of the stable-boys hot-foot to warn the Senhora of their approach and followed with Antonio and Luis. In ten minutes they reached a garish new house, faced all over with coloured tiles.

Margarida received her old flame with slight chilliness. Although she had turned thirty-five her good looks were not greatly diminished. With her sat Perpetua, Jorge, Lucia, and Juliana, her four black-eyed children, who were struck dumb by the advent of the handsome stranger. At first the proceedings were dull and frigid enough to remind Antonio of his first visit to Margarida's home. But Luis and Theophilo, in reaction from their days of stress and terror, soon became almost hysterically gay. The guitars came out; and when everyone was tired of singing and strumming *fados* Antonio devoted himself to the little Jorge and his three tongue-tied sisters. He gradually wooed them out of their shyness by telling them a tale of the buried city of Troja, at the mouth of the Sado. By the time he was half through a revised version of the Three Hunchbacks of Setubal the audience had begun to be more tongue-free than himself; and, when he made Perpetua hold the candle so that his clenched left fist and his right-hand fingers and knuckles threw upon the wall a shadow of a long-eared rabbit nibbling a cabbage as big as itself, the house rang with shouts of laughter.

The children were sent to bed at nine, wailing bitterly at their banishment. Theophilo took the guitar and played softly, so as not to keep them awake. He had a sympathetic touch and his music soothed Antonio. Sitting in a great chair, the monk looked round the room and wondered. His conto of reis had gone. In forty hours it would be too late to pay the attorney, and the usurers could be trusted so to foreclose the mortgage as to swindle him out of nearly all he had. Yet, somehow, he was happier than he had been for

many a day. For a short while he asked himself if i were not callous to gaze so calmly at the wreck of hi life's work. Ought he not to be aching and smartin and bleeding as he had ached and smarted and bled fo Isabel? Did he truly care as deeply for the abbey an for the Order as he had cared for her?

All these probings left him unpricked. His content ment obstinately refused to be ruffled. Breaking hi rule, he drank two glasses of sweet wine and ate a whol broa of Margarida's making. When he rose to g Margarida's manner was perceptibly less aloof, and sh begged him to come again. At the street door Theo philo said:

'Your Excellency has heaped kindness upon kindness How shall I ever repay him?'

'By permitting me to visit his house again to-morrow night,' answered Antonio; 'your Worship will have be come my creditor. Adeus.'

He worked his hand free from Theophilo's iron grip and returned to the hospedaria, where he fell asleep a soon as his head touched the pillow. Next morning after Mass, he did not lose a moment in opening negotia tions for the raising of an immediate conto of reis on his encumbered assets. But Luis and Theophilo, in pledging all they possessed, had almost exhausted the ready-money resources of Navares. Late in the after noon Antonio thought he was succeeding; but the existence of the Oporto usurers' second mortgage on the farm blocked the way. At four o'clock he gave up the struggle and went to Santa Cruz to say his Office At half-past five he sat down in the hospedaria to dine

Just after the soup tureen had been placed on the table a tremendous noise arose from the street. Every

dog in Navares was outside, barking his hardest, and the iron shoes of a spirited horse were hammering on the cobbles. The Gallego waiter rushed downstairs to welcome the guest. Doors banged, ostlers shouted, buckets clanked, a horse neighed. The inn cat, which Antonio had been nursing, leapt from his knee and rushed downstairs to the lobby whence the prolonged wail of a badly scratched dog immediately ascended.

The monk, alone at the table, filled his gaudy plate with vegetable soup and began to eat. The stranger came upstairs to his room amidst a babble of welcoming voices. Through the thin wall Antonio could hear him drop his heavy boots on the bare floor. A cheerful splashing followed. The Gallego waiter, hurrying in with a dish of bacalhau, white cabbage, and hard-boiled eggs, excitedly explained to Antonio that the new-comer was an Englishman; and, five minutes later, a plumpish, rather florid man, with a clean-shaven face and soft yellow hair, strode into the room calling out an order for green wine.

Antonio rose and found himself face to face with young Crowberry. But, somehow, he could not feel in the least degree surprised.

'Good evening, Teddy,' he said quietly. 'Welcome to Navares.'

Young Crowberry jumped. He stared blankly across the soup at the grey-haired man with the gentle voice. Then he flung himself forward against the table so impetuously that a brown water-pot was overturned and an empty glass jumped down to the floor with a crash.

'Da Rocha! By Jove! Da Rocha!' he cried, wringing the monk's hand. 'Man, I've come all the

way from England to find you. Why the deuce di
you drop writing? And what do you mean by growin
grey hairs? How's José and all the little Josés, an
the champagne and all the little champagnes, and th
orange brandy? Have you pawned the spoons? D
Rocha! By Jove!'

'Come round and sit beside me,' said Antonio.

As the deluge from the overturned water-pot ha
soaked the cloth all round him the monk bade th
waiter remove his cover and young Crowberry's to th
little table by the window.

'And ask him to bring green wine,' said young Crow
berry. 'Quarts. Gallons. Buckets. Hogshead
Bottomless pits. I'm as thirsty as the devil.'

When orderly conversation became possible, the mon
was able to puzzle out a mystery which had pained hi
By comparing notes and sifting dates they found th
one letter from Antonio msut have gone down in t
wreck of the mail-boat *Hortensia*, and that anoth
letter had reached England while an unsatisfacto
sub-tenant was occupying young Crowberry's chambe
After this misunderstanding had been righted the mo
proceeded to draw out his friend's recent history.
found that young Crowberry, in his own phrase, h
made three fortunes, of which he had lost two and thre
quarters in financing foreign railway companies
whom he had been employed.

'But what does it matter?' demanded young Cro
berry. 'I've a quarter of a fortune left, and I'm hopi
it'll be enough for my scheme. The man I'm trying
get in with isn't greedy."

'Explain,' asked the monk.

'I'm hoping to buy a share of a snug little busin

and settle down,' young Crowberry answered. 'A wine business. I was born among bottles, and a cellar's better than a tunnel. That's why I've come to Portugal. I've invested four thousand pounds in British Funds for miscellaneous purposes, and to-morrow I'm going to offer my remaining five thousand to a man named da Rocha for a partnership.'

Antonio heard him without visible emotion. For a long minute he gazed quietly into the street. At last he said:

'Edward, you asked me half an hour ago if I had pawned the spoons. They were pawned two years ago, to pay a Jew twenty per cent interest on a loan I'd repaid twice over. But it's a long story. Drink your coffee. Then we will go to your room.'

In young Crowberry's room Antonio disclosed his secret. He began with his brief experiences as a youth in Lisbon. Rapidly and vividly he described his brief scepticism, his vocation to the religious life, his noviciate, his full profession, his ordination, his expulsion from the abbey, and his vow at the farm. Omitting only the affairs of Margarida and Isabel, he brought the history right down to that very day and to the moment of his failing to raise money in replacement of Theophilo's conto of reis. He slurred lightly over every passage in the narrative which might sound like self-praise, and sought rather to exhibit himself as a blunderer who ought to have attained his end years and years ago. He wound up by saying simply:

'It is our Lord who has sent you here to-day. If you have it with you, I will borrow a conto of reis and we will ride over to Villa Branca together in the morning. On the way we will talk about the partnership. My

maximum price for a half-share will be a thousand pounds.'

'My minimum offer is five thousand,' said the engineer firmly. 'Remember that I'm hoping to foist myself upon you till death do us part. I have wound up all my affairs in England. Meanwhile here is a conto of reis.'

Some one knocked loudly at the door. It was the Gallego announcing that two senhores wished to see the Senhor da Rocha at once. The senhores, treading on the Gallego's heels, turned out to be Theophilo and Luis. They pressed into the room, but fell back at the sight of a stranger.

'You may speak freely, Theophilo,' said Antonio. 'This is the Senhor Crowberry. He knows my affairs. Tell me what you want. My own trouble is over. Senhor Crowberry has brought me a conto of reis.'

'And here it is,' put in Crowberry, opening his pocket-book. 'I don't know how much a conto may be; but if it's less than two thousand pounds, help yourself.'

'No,' cried Theophilo. 'We want nothing. Senhor da Rocha, I have wonderful news. Sequeira has come back. He had mixed the town money up with his own, but he is not a thief. He has just come back from Lisbon, and he has repaid me every vintem of what Luis and I paid to the municipal chamber yesterday. See. Here are the notes. Seven contos and two hundred milreis.'

'And a special post has arrived from Leiria,' added the radiant Luis, 'with a conto from Theophilo's father. Theophilo, shew it to their Excellencies.'

'How many contos are here?' asked Crowberry, spreading out his notes.

'At the present exchange, you have at least twelve,' said Antonio. 'A conto is a million reis of our money and more than two hundred pounds of yours, at par.'

'So we've twenty million reis altogether,' Crowberry chuckled. 'Let's change 'em into coppers and swim in 'em to see what it's like. Hasn't any gentleman got a conto or two more? I once knew a duke who overlooked a whole threepenny-bit for a week. It was in the lining of his old coat.'

Luis and Theophilo stared at the Englishman with open mouths. They could not understand a word he said, but this made him the more marvellous. From Crowberry they shifted their wonder to Antonio. He seemed to have called down from the skies a familiar sprite who handed out millions as coolly as one boy giving another a few screws of newspaper for the tail of his kite.

'Put back your money, all of you,' commanded Antonio. 'Theophilo, give me your father's conto and we are square. And have I your leave to present my friend to Donna Margarida?'

The whole party made haste to the tiled house, where Jorge and his sisters hailed Antonio with shouts of joy. They were shy of young Crowberry at first; but, having asked [illegible] minutes' leave of absence, the Englishman slipped out to a confeitaria and returned laden with so exciting a load of candied oranges, Elvas plums, Coimbra marmalade, and Spanish chocolate that Antonio's star was eclipsed for half an hour. The guitars and the sweet wine came out once more. Later on young Crowberry began to tease poor Margarida

with such exaggerated compliments, in bad Portuguese, that Antonio was forced to kick his heel and to explain in hurried English that Navares was neither London nor Paris. But Theophilo did not take offence, and the visit was entirely a success.

On the way home Antonio asked:

'Do you hear anything of Miss Kaye-Templeman and Mrs. Baxter?'

'The widow Baxter is now the widow Lamb,' answered Crowberry. 'Lamb was a master-tanner. He survived the wedding six months. That's all I know. As for Isabel, I've heard nothing for years and years and years. After her father died she went to live with Lady Julia Blighe. By the way, you never told me what you really and truly thought of her.'

Antonio turned the subject.

'When you say,' he demanded, 'that you are planning to live and die with me, what do you mean? If you are looking for a rural life, with the sports of a country gentleman, England is the only place to find it. If it's wine that interests you, I'm sorry; because you drink too much already. What do you mean?'

'I am not looking for the sports of a country gentleman,' said Crowberry. 'As for wine, you are mistaken. I drink a glass or two a day of the lightest at meals, and I never touch port or spirits. Da Rocha, I will tell you what I mean. Perhaps you were pained in my bedroom when I did not shew great astonishment at hearing that you are Father Antonio, a monk of Saint Benedict.'

'I was not pained. But I wondered.'

'Father Antonio, I guessed your secret years ago. I guessed it on the voyage home from Lisbon. I guessed that you were working to regain the abbey. From

what Sir Percy told my father, I believed you secured it after we went away. I imagined that you had resumed the cloistered life and that this was why you didn't write to your old friends in the world.'

'But you came out, this time, to become my partner as a wine-grower,' objected Antonio.

'Yes and No. I came out with money to buy vineyards and to work for my living as you have done. I meant to buy them as close to the abbey as I could. I meant to seek you out and to ask you . . . to tell you . . .'

'Go on,' said Antonio, taking his arm as they walked. 'To ask me what? To tell me what?'

'To tell you that the burning desire of my soul,' broke out the other ardently, 'is to become a monk, like you. To ask you for your prayers and for your help. And when I saw you standing over your soup, still in a layman's dress, I didn't alter my mind.'

Antonio remembered the vision of young Crowberry's future which had unrolled itself before him while the youth and he sat side by side on the cloister roof the day before Sir Percy failed to tear down the azulejos. In reverent thankfulness he listened to this older Crowberry without interrupting him again. But the Englishman misinterpreted his silence, and added hastily:

'Let me be plain. I don't claim to have the highest and holiest vocation. Some would say there is cowardice in what I want to do. I am running away from the world. The truth is that so long as I am in the world I cannot love and praise God. Whenever I have a pit and a gallery to play to, I am a rattle, a gas-bag, a mountebank. In spite of myself I jest about the holiest things, thus injuring others as well as myself. I want

to work hard with my hands, to rise early, to sleep and eat roughly, and to learn to pray. Let people call me a coward if they please. I'm nearly forty. I've made my money, and I'm standing aside to let needier men make theirs. Besides, I hate rail-ways. They will do more harm than good.'

Antonio was still mute.

'When a middle-aged man in my country has made a competency,' young Crowberry continued, 'he either remains in business to make money which he does not need, or he retires and lives a life of selfish and expensive pleasure. A few, a very few, devote themselves to philanthropy or politics, and I honour them for it; but it has been breathed into my soul that I am to help mankind by prayer. Da Rocha, you are silent. You are shocked. You think that, instead of rising up early to pray, I ought to rise up early to go hounding and shooting the poor beasts and birds who have as much right to their lives as I have to mine.'

'I have been silent,' rejoined Antonio, 'only because I could not speak, for thankfulness. Nearly twenty years ago I knew that you would become a priest, and I hoped that you might become a monk.'

'You consent? I may be your pupil?' cried the Englishman.

'I consent. You may be my helper, my fellow-labourer. You have much to learn and much to unlearn. Listen. This very night your training shall begin. Resolve that you will never again say you are as thirsty as the devil. The rest we will talk of to-morrow.'

Antonio smiled kindly as he spoke. Young Crowberry noticed that the monk's expression was full of a

solemn sweetness which had not been visible in the old days. At the same moment he became conscious of Antonio's broken health. The monk walked rather slowly and leaned heavily on the layman's arm. They did not speak another word till they reached the inn door.

Next morning, when Antonio awoke, he found young Crowberry standing over him with a bowl of Brazilian coffee and goat's milk, a newly-baked roll of white bread, and, rarest delicacy of all, a pat of butter. Protest was useless. A quarter of an hour later the sprucest barber in Navares appeared and shaved Antonio with the skill of a German. At seven o'clock horses began stamping outside; and, at five minutes past, Antonio and the Englishman were seated in a well-hung carriage behind a pair of bays.

'Does the Jehu understand English?' asked young Crowberry, cutting short Antonio's remonstrances against all this luxury. 'No. He doesn't. Good. Then, most reverend and illustrious Father, listen to me. One month from this date I, the most irreverend Senhor Teddy Crowberry, will begin to be your most docile servant. I shall obey you in all things. You shall be my Lord Abbot till one of us dies. But, for this month, your Reverence will obey *me*. Argument is useless. If I spend five guineas a day for thirty days, remember that I hope to live on fivepence a week for the following thirty years.'

'A month! It is impossible,' cried Antonio. 'Besides, José expects me back to-night.'

'I think he doesn't. An old ruffian on a white horse has taken him a letter from me. I was nearly asking him to send on your shirts to the inn at Villa Branca;

but, if your Excellency will forgive my disgusting rudeness, I couldn't feel sure that you had a shirt to send. From Villa Branca we shall go to Oporto and punch the heads of those Jews. We shall wind up all your affairs there. Thence we shall go to Braga and see the Archbishop. After that, back to Coimbra, and to Lisbon to see the Patriarch and the Pope's Nuncio, and perhaps to Evora. See what a lot I know! I've been thinking it all over and over and over in the night. You are the only Benedictine left in Portugal, and we shall have to get these big pots to help us. Pah! How the sun does blaze. I'm as thirsty as an archbishop.'

Young Crowberry had his way. After the Villa Branca attorney had been paid, Antonio was driven to the principal inn and served with such a luncheon as he had not eaten for twenty years. The next day, Sunday, after the military Mass, the monk ate a still more elaborate meal and whiled away the hour of digestion by reclining on the shaded balcony looking at the promenaders in the Passeio and listening to the band. In the cool of the evening they set out in a luxurious chariot towards Oporto. Three days were spent on the journey.

It was a triumphal progress. One of young Crowberry's first acts on arriving at an inn was to send forward a mounted messenger, with full instructions, to the next halting-place. As these couriers bruited it in every wayside wineshop that a bountiful Englishman was on the road, Antonio's chariot was attended by troops of brown-footed, brown-eyed, black-haired children who threw flowers at the travellers and trotted alongside the wheels pleading for ' five little reis '—the Portuguese farthing. Instead of *cinco reis* young Crowberry flung

out tostoēs, or fivepenny pieces, such as most of the youngsters had never handled on their own account before, and the chariot rolled on amidst pæans of joy.

In Oporto, where Antonio had supported life on a few pence a day, the travellers put up at a French-managed hotel and drank dry champagne from Reims. Emboldened by this lively draught, young Crowberry dealt with Neumann and Mual to such purpose that they thankfully accepted three hundred pounds in full discharge of Antonio's outstanding obligations. With the abbey deeds in Antonio's valise the travellers took the direct road for Lisbon, where the archbishops and bishops, as peers of the kingdom, had assembled for the opening of the Cortes. Here and there along the route young Crowberry pointed out the cuttings and embankments for the projected railway. In Coimbra they rested two days and read up every book they could find in the University library which bore upon the case before them.

Young Crowberry was for a theatrical burst upon the whole bench of bishops in Lisbon; but the prudent Antonio sought out his own diocesan and confided to him the whole story. The prelate heard him attentively and with growing emotion. He told Antonio that the Dominicans and Franciscans had already recovered certain houses in Portugal, and that the Government, having got its money, was winking at the return of the Orders. He bestowed upon the monk a fervent blessing and bade him return the next day.

Within forty-eight hours Antonio was received by three-fourths of the Portuguese hierarchy, and by the Papal Nuncio as well. His tale brought tears to the eyes of all, not excepting a political bishop who was

supposed to believe that Portugal would be better off without the religious Orders than with them. The Nuncio despatched a special memorandum to Rome, and three of the bishops wrote long letters to Benedictine abbots abroad, including an abbot-president, asking for their counsel.

Young Crowberry's deportment among these dignitaries left a little to be desired. At his entrance he would kneel and kiss the ring of a suffragan with disconcerting ardour, and the next minute he would begin to tell the Primate of the Spains a funny story in execrable French. On the whole, however, young Crowberry was better liked for his worldliness than for his piety. His dinner at the Bragança Hotel made a deep impression upon those ecclesiastics who were not too dignified to assist at it; and when their magnificent month drew to a close the Englishman and Antonio left Lisbon with the knowledge that they had committed no grave blunders and that they had made a host of powerful friends.

José received the Senhor Crôbri warmly. Within two days of the Englishman's arrival at the abbey the mortgages on the farm and the sea-sand vineyards were cleared off and the silver spoons came back from pawn. On Saint Isabel's Day both José and young Crowberry were assigned cells in the monastery; and from that morning community life was solidly established and the Work of God was regularly performed in choir. At Christmas, with Antonio's permission, another novice arrived in the person of an English clergyman who had been young Crowberry's closest friend.

Months passed. Twice Antonio received ecclesiastical notables at the abbey and twice he was bidden to Lisbon.

At length it was found possible to form a small cosmopolitan community of monks from Brazil, Spain, Bavaria, and Belgium. As the sole link between Portugal's old and new Benedictine life, and as the saviour of the abbey for his Order, every one looked towards Antonio as the new Abbot. But he set his face like a flint against the plan.

'My Lord,' he said to the Nuncio, who had been expressly charged to impart to him the blessing of Pio Nono and to enquire what boon Antonio most desired, 'ask the Holy Father to intercede with those who would make me Abbot against my will. For more than twenty years I have dwelt in the world, buying and selling, and I am not fit to guide the simplest monk in the religious life. Suffer me to obey my Master's word. I hear Him saying, *Vade, recumbe in novissimo loco.*'

'Father Antonio stops his ears too soon,' observed the German Abbot-President who was assisting at the interview. 'In the same verse of the Gospel he will find also *Amice, ascende superius.* But let him be consoled. The anniversary of his ordination, and of his expulsion from the house he has saved, is drawing near. On that day let him say his first Mass; and after he has said it, let all things be set in order.'

VII

On the day of his first Mass Antonio rose at dawn and climbed the spiral stairway to his bench on the roof of the cloister. A cardinal, three bishops, and two abbots were sleeping within the abbey walls, and a duke and his duchess were up at the guest-house. The monk yearned for solitude after a distracting week, and the cell was too narrow for his expanding and aspiring soul.

Muffled in a warm new cloak which young Crowberry had forced upon him in Lisbon, Antonio bent his whole mind and soul to the ineffably sacred and glorious Work which lay before him. At last, after all these years of dogged battle, he had won the fight. At last the dead Abbot's prophecy was about to be fulfilled, and he, Antonio, was about to break the most holy Body and to hold up in the great chalice the most precious Blood.

To his dismay he found it difficult to meditate steadfastly upon God's unspeakable Gift. Try as he would, he could not concentrate an undivided mind upon the crowning mystery of faith. That his thoughts should wander a little on the morning of such an anniversary was perhaps natural; but somehow every thought led back to Isabel. He rebuked himself sharply, and forced his mind once more to pious thinkings. He called to memory the holy Francis of Assisi who died a deacon, and the holy Benedict who died a layman. If these

two saints, who stood so high among all the saints of the universal Church, had never presumed to offer the Holy Sacrifice, how could he, Antonio, who had lived less than ten years in religion and more than forty in the world, dare to say this Mass?

Despite his efforts to dislodge it, the thought of Isabel neither moved nor weakened. Words which she had spoken on the last afternoon at the cascade rang like bugles through his brain. In terrible wrath and bitterness she had cried: 'I will come back! You will succeed. You will regain the abbey. You will fill it with monks. But remember. I will come back. On the day of your triumph I will be there. It isn't only you Southern people who love revenge. I will be there. I will come back!'

He rose from the bench and gazed at the calm Atlantic, glittering under the first sunbeams. But he could not banish the echo of her words. Isabel was coming back! Not for revenge. Ever since the end of his second novena to Saint Isabel he had rested quietly in a firm confidence that his prayers for Isabel Kaye-Templeman had been granted, and that his great hope had been fulfilled. She was coming back, not in hatred, but in peace.

No. All this was folly, and worse. How could she come back? How could she, after twenty years, find out what was happening in a corner of distant Portugal? The very idea was madness. Nevertheless Antonio could not drive it away. He descended to his cell, but her invisible presence seemed to fill it; and it was only in the chapel that he firmly regrasped the threads of his inward preparations for the coming Sacrifice.

Eager whisperings in the nave drove him back to his

cell. Lay folk from far and near were beginning to arrive. All of them had risen before daybreak, and some of them had been tramping all night. Throughout the country-side an exaggerated account of Antonio's acts and sufferings had sustained so much embellishment that he was already being venerated as a saint of heroic virtue. Had he not, simply by praying in the Navares church, caused an English lord to spring up, so to speak, out of the earth with fifty contos of reis, all in gold? Had he not cast a devil out of the shaggy, wild-eyed José? Had he not withstood the rich and beautiful Margarida? Had he not wrought the indisputable miracle of changing common wine into champagne simply by standing a bottle on its head? Had he not driven away from the azulejos the stiff Englishman with the icy, golden-haired daughter, all by a supernatural spell of holy anger? And, to crown all, was he not making a cardinal and three bishops to grow where never more than one bishop had grown before?

A little later the mere sightseers were reinforced by files of devouter worshippers whose Christian souls had glowed and burned at the tale of Antonio's faithfulness; and, by degrees, the reverential expectancy of these more earnest spirits hushed all unseemly shufflings and whisperings. According to Portuguese custom there were no seats, and everybody knelt on the floor. As the nave became more crowded the strange silence became deeper. It was broken at last by the unrestrained sobbing of the widow Joanna Quintella, who was suddenly filled with bitter remorse for having fastened upon Antonio his nickname of 'the abbey miser.' Her example was too much for the weaker wills, and one after another joined her in weeping.

The cardinal and the bishops, whose visit was unofficial, had stipulated that they should not be expected to make a ceremonious entrance or to bear themselves with any appearance of defiance towards the obsolescent laws against the Orders. They seated themselves without ostentation in stalls which were only distinguished from the stalls of the monks by thin cushions and kneelers stuffed with straw. There, with bowed heads, they prayed not only for Antonio and for the restored Benedictine life of Portugal, but also for a renewal of the fervour with which each one of them had said his first Mass long years before.

On the stroke of ten the sacred ministers emerged from the sacristy. As his assistant priest Antonio was accompanied by one of the new community, a young Benedictine from Brazil. A Franciscan from a restored house in Entre Minho e Douro was deacon, and the subdeacon was the village cura. The servers were José and Brother Cypriano, last of the old lay-brethren, who had arrived the night before from Evora.

As Antonio appeared a murmur of awe escaped from the intent crowd in the nave. The monk had recovered his power of concentration, and his face was not like the face of a mortal man. But he moved forward, all unconscious that the people were not pleading with God for mercy upon him as a poor and presumptuous sinner.

To make a way to the sanctuary the acolytes had almost to push through the people; and at one point the procession was brought to a momentary halt. Instantly a handsome woman, whom Antonio remembered as one of the belles of Senhor Jorge's serão, held up a puzzled, big-eyed child and said, in eager tones loud enough for the monk to hear:

'Look, little one, look! It is a saint that is passing by!'

At the same moment a rough young farmer bent forward and clumsily kissed the hem of Antonio's chasuble. The monk recoiled and almost let the sacred vessels fall. The man's touch and the woman's words had cut him like knives. A saint! He, Antonio, the hard, the proud, a saint! All the selfishness of his life rose up before him. His long coldness to José; his persistent aloofness from the life of the village which he ought to have shared and uplifted; his whipping and driving of Isabel with whips of rebuke and argument when he ought to have led her with silken cords of sympathy; his repeated refusals of ch when a little more fasting and a little more labour uld have enabled him to feed the hungry; his self-esteem; his want of meekness under opposition and insult—these, all these, were the solid facts of his life, standing up as gaunt and huge as monstrous rocks with only one poor shrunken runnel of love trickling down between. A saint! If the sacred vestments had not been hanging from his shoulders he would have cried, 'No, good people, no! Pray for me. I am the poorest sinner of you all.'

The crucifer cleared a passage through the kneeling, murmuring, weeping people, and the procession moved on, picking a way among the broad-brimmed hats and wallets of provisions which lay on the pavement. After making five or six yards of progress it came to a halt again. His pious preoccupation could not wholly blind Antonio's eyes to the picturesqueness of the sight. The many-coloured kerchiefs of the women, the rich olive skins and glossy black hair of the children, and the

bright waistbands of the men were made ten times more sumptuous by the cool, monotonous background of blue-and-white azulejos. Here and there a knot of shepherds, in sheepskins, knelt with their long staves rising up like spears above the heads of an army. Two or three fans moved languidly, like [illegible] flowers swaying in a breeze. Straight ahead beyond the black monks and the purple prelates, rose the high altar, with the Virgin and her Child enthroned above the soft flames of six tall candles, set in candlesticks of burnished gold.

As the procession resumed its march Antonio's glance was suddenly seized by a sight which almost made him stumble. Close to the wall, beside the cloister doorway, knelt Isabel. Her form was enveloped in an exquisitely fine dust-cloak of silver-grey, and a black lace mantilla covered her head. Yet, even before he saw her face, he knew that it was she. The cherubs in the azulejos above the doorway seemed to be looking down upon her curiously, as if they found in her something different from common clay. Her gaze was fixed upon the ground.

Recovering his self-control by a supreme effort, Antonio advanced to the sanctuary and made the due obeisances. Then he knelt down before the altar. No one wondered that his silent prayer was long; for was he not a saint and was not this his first Mass? The silence was profound from one end of the chapel to the other.

But Antonio's prayers were not what the onlookers thought. Isabel had come back; and, according to his practice, it was necessary to face the fact squarely in the light of common prudence. For nearly twenty years he had cherished one great hope concerning her

until it had become a belief. For nearly twenty years he had given thanks to Saint Isabel for her miraculous intercession. But it was possible that, for nearly twenty years, he had been hugging a delusion.

'On the day of your triumph I will be there.' So she had spoken; and she was keeping her word. 'It isn't only you Southern people who love revenge.' So she had stormed on; and perhaps it was for revenge that she was come. With a sickening of heart Antonio suddenly remembered reading in the Villa Branca paper a sordid story of a passionate woman in Sicily who had murdered a v[illegible]uous young priest on the steps of the altar. He remembered also young Crowberry's account of the throwing of a bomb at the new Emperor Napoleon in Paris. So far as he knew, such deeds were un-English; and, although Isabel was imperious, he could not credit her with a smouldering Latin vindictiveness leaping up into a fiery blaze of showy crime. Yet, after all, he knew so little of women, so little of the new hysteria which men told him was rife in the world.

What ought he to do? For himself and for his own life he did not care. His work was done; and if God willed that he should add the poor offering of his own blood to the infinite worth of the immaculate Host, he was ready to pour it forth. But what if there should be scandal, or, worse still, sacrilege? Or what if some desperate deed should wreak pain or death upon the innocent people? Ought he to rise from his knees, and to implore the prelates to grant him immediate audience in a place apart? With the whole might of his soul he besought Saint Isabel to intercede for him and to shew him God's will.

A child in the nave let fall a rosary of copper beads.

At the noise of the metal on the stone Antonio rose up. An inward voice bade him say his Mass and leave the rest with God. Making the sign of the cross, he invoked the Triune Name and said, in a clear voice, '*Introibo ad altare Dei.*'

At the Confiteor his earnestness was so terrible that the subdeacon shrank back, understanding for the first time the blackness and foulness and meanness of the smallest sin against the eternal holiness and majesty and love. Even in the nave, where it was impossible to hear Antonio's voice or to see his face, the poignancy of the monk's Confiteor made itself felt. Like ripe corn bowing before a wind, the most hardened and careless bent lower and yearned forward in an anguish of contrition for forgotten sins; and when Antonio pronounced the words *indulgentiam, absolutionem et remissionem* the whole chapel respired one great sigh, as if a merciful king had just ended the suspense of a culprit condemned to death. At the Gloria all hearts soared up like birds to hymn the good God in the heights.

After the first Gospel one of the bishops arose to preach. He recited for a text the words of Isaias, *Dicam aquiloni, Da, et austro, Noli prohibere. Affer filios meos de longinquo, et filias meas ab extremis terrae:* "I will say to the north, Give, and to the south, Hold not back. Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth." His magniloquent exordium was worthy of the bishop's reputation as the most eloquent preacher in the Peninsula. In stately periods he began to shew how north and south had indeed given their sons to rebuild the Benedictine Order in Portugal. But, at such a moment, his eloquence jarred. He him-

self was the first to become convinced of its discordance; and, suddenly changing the key, he humbly asked the prayers of all on Antonio's behalf and went back to his place.

The Creed, which young Crowberry and his clerical friend had been brought up to regard as a penitential chain dragging at the human intellect, was sung more triumphantly than a battle-song or a national anthem, with all the eagerness of enthusiastic faith. When Antonio turned and said *Orate, fratres*, even the sightseers prayed.

At last Antonio began the Canon. At the commemoration of the living, Isabel was the chief burden of his prayer. Having prayed for her, he thrust her from his mind and pressed on to the supreme moment of the Consecration. Spreading his hands over the oblation, he raised his eyes to the ivory figure of the Crucified. As he gazed, scales fell from his eyes. He saw, as he had never seen before, the everlasting sacrifice which lay behind and around the cross of Calvary. He saw behind the Victim who hung dying for three hours on the first Good Friday, the *Agnus qui occisus est ab origine mundi*, 'The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' He saw the *Sacerdos in æturnum*, 'the Priest for ever,' *semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis*, 'ever living to make intercession for us.' He understood that the unutterable miracle of which he, Antonio, was about to become the instrument was not a stroke of strange magic, but a gracious overflow of that everlasting intercession. From books he had known these things with his mind: but now he knew them with his whole soul. His priestly instrumentality, like the rod of Moses, was about to strike the Rock; but the bright

stream waiting to gush forth was the everlasting love of the Redeemer, flowing onward in its fulness whether Mass was said or not. Yet the children of Israel had died of thirst had not Moses raised his rod; and it was through him, Antonio, a weak and unworthy priest on earth, that men were about to receive the supreme bounty of the *Pontifex qui consedit in dextera sedis magnitudinis in cœlis*, 'the High Priest who sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.'

When he elevated the sacred Host, Cypriano was ready to ring the sacring bells; but awe stayed his hand. From the cardinal in his purple down to the poorest hind in his sheepskin, all adored the God of God and Light of Light. Every heart cried, *Verbum caro factum est*: 'The Word is made flesh and is dwelling among us, and we are beholding His glory.'

Antonio pronounced the words *Simili modo* and took the cup. At last God was fulfilling the old Abbot's prophecy: 'I see Antonio standing before the high altar. I see him holding up our great chalice. I see him offering the Holy Sacrifice for us all.' He raised the great chalice, with the blood-red rubies, which José had saved from the Viscount. Once again Cypriano tried to ring the sacring bell; once again the general awe restrained him. In deepest reverence all adored the precious Blood. Then burst forth the thankful cry *Benedictus*: 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

Very solemnly and intently Antonio made the memento of the dead, especially of the dead Abbot and the fathers and brethren of the old community. He had said the Pater Noster thousands and thousands of times before; but as he stood before the altar every one

of its petitions ascended from his lips without a trace of formalism or staleness. And when the time came for him to receive the celestial Bread, his *Domine, non sum dignus:* 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof,' was not merely a devout reading of seemly words from the printed missal; it was an uttering forth of his inmost soul.

The sacrifice was consummated. He took the ablutions and covered the chalice. When the deacon had sung *Ite, missa est*, men and women who had never tried to sing the response before joined the choir of monks in thundering out a mighty *Deo gratias*. Then the prelates knelt to receive Antonio's blessing. The lordly cardinal was the first to kneel. He knelt as if he were the meanest altar-boy rather than a Prince of Holy Roman Church, and all the others made haste to follow his example. The monk, in deepest humility, blessed the people.

Antonio's thanksgiving was less prolonged than his brethren expected. But when they crowded round to escort him to the place of honour in the refectory he begged most earnestly that the meal might proceed without him. To the fervid protests of the cardinal and the foreign abbots he responded that from the morrow onwards he would re-enter the path of unquestioning obedience; but, for the remainder of this one day he humbly sought leave to go and come as might seem him good.

As soon as he had wrung out a reluctant consent Antonio slowly crossed the cloister garden. Two or three of the new monks sprang forward to attend him; but he waved them aside and went on, with slow steps and bent head. A bell clanged, and they melted away.

He quickened his pace until he gained the door with the secret lock; and, before the echoes of the bell had ceased humming in the still air, he was standing on the causeway outside the cloister.

Not since the night of the thunderstorm had he walked along those moss-grown slabs. At the end of the causeway, where he had lifted Isabel upon his shoulder, he hesitated a short moment. Then he stepped down and followed a woodland path until the soft thunder of the cascade boomed upon his ear. The earth under his tread was sweet and bright with thousands of May flowers, and the May birds sang as they had sung on the May morning of Sebastian's last Mass.

Not for twenty years had Antonio set foot within a furlong of the stepping-stones. But José had obeyed his orders to the letter. A few gaps in the trees had been filled up, but otherwise nothing was changed. As he climbed the path the dull pounding of the tumbling water drowned the crooning of the stream at his feet, and at last he caught the silvery flash of the cascade through the trees, like a great fish struggling in a basket of reeds. And the flash of the cascade was not all Antonio saw. He saw as well a fine silver-grey cloak thrown down on a flat boulder; and, standing beside it, a nun of the Order of the Visitation.

VIII

'I KNEW that you would come,' said Isabel quietly as Antonio emerged from the bushes.

'I knew I should find you here,' Antonio answered, more quietly still.

It seemed no more than a few feverish months since their parting. The boulder, the stepping-stones, the pool, the cascade, the rapids, the palms, the mimosas, the tree-ferns, the cypresses—all seemed unchanged. He raised his eyes and gazed steadily at Isabel. Time had not filched away her loveliness. Indeed, the nun's head-dress served even better than the golden ringlets of old to frame her beautiful features and to heighten both the blueness of her eyes and the whiteness of her brow. Like her father before her, she held herself as erect in middle-age as in youth. If some of the girlish bloom had gone, the loss was more than made good by new charms of womanly tenderness and Christian peacefulness.

'You see I have kept my word,' she said, speaking easily and quite naturally. 'On the day we parted, did I not say that I would come back? I have come.'

'Yes,' echoed Antonio, like a man in a dream. 'You have come.'

'When you saw me,' she added, with a smile, 'perhaps you thought I had come to shoot you or to stab

you; or to set the chapel on fire, bishops and abbots and all.'

Not for a moment had he lowered his gaze from her face. Merely to behold her again and to hear her voice, whatever her words might be, was happiness enough. The accord between them was so perfect that there was no need for questions, answers, news, explanations, reminiscences, plans, greetings, farewells. But she was waiting for him to speak; and at last, in the same dreamy tone as before, he pointed to her nun's dress and said:

'This wonderful thing came to pass, did it not, on the eighth of July, twenty months after you went away? That day was the feast of Saint Isabel of Portugal. It was also the last day of a novena I had been making to this very end. On that day, as I sat in the chapel, I heard women's voices, far-off and sweet, chanting the Divine Office; and I knew that this miracle had come to pass.'

'You were not mistaken,' she said, in low tones. 'I awoke to my vocation on the eighth of July, the year but one after I left this place.'

Minutes passed before either of them spoke again. Not that time and distance had been able to estrange them. They were one in heart and mind as they had never been before. But Isabel's mood had swiftly become attuned to Antonio's. It was enough to be at his side on their old battle-field and to know how perfect was their peace. For a long while they stood speechless with the great light of the Atlantic sparkling before their eyes and the great music of the cascade resounding in their ears. Antonio was the first to break the silence.

'Happiness is not the principal thing,' he said, still gazing at the sea. 'But I should like to know that you are happy.'

'I am happy,' she answered in a firm voice. 'Entirely happy.'

'For that,' he said simply, 'I thank God.'

Another silence followed, longer than the other. At last she said:

'You are weary. You must sit down. Our time together is very short, so let me say what I ought to say.'

They sat down on the boulder.

'That afternoon you sent me away,' she began, 'I went home with hatred and vengeance in my heart. I hated you and I hated God. I did not sleep; but, until dawn, neither did I shed a single tear. My hatred was like a terrible joy. It filled me so full that it left no room for grief. But when the sun shone upon my white roses and all the birds began to sing, my hatred snapped like a dry reed, and I threw myself on the bed and wept until I thought I should die.

'Gradually hope returned. I knew that you loved me; and I told myself that you would come to the cascade and that you would fall on your knees and implore my pardon. I even decided what I would wear, and I chose out a turquoise-blue ribbon for my hair because I thought you had admired it.

'Happily I had some pride left. I didn't go to the cascade. But I bound my hair with the turquoise-blue ribbon all the same, and waited for you to come to the house.

'You know you never came. Instead, your man José appeared. I heard chaff flying backwards and forwards between himself and the servants. Fisher repeated some

of it to me; and I learned that you had started at sunrise on a long day's journey.

'That was the last unendurable blow. You had run away lest I should summon you again to the cascade, or burst into your farm, or do some other shameless thing. It stung me to the quick. I became in a single moment as hard and cold as iron in a frost, and as bitter as poison. I pictured you coming up the next morning to say a ceremonious Good-bye—coming up all cool and self-possessed and hateful. It was too much. I decided to join my father at once. I enforced my will like a tyrant; and, before you came back, we were gone.'

She paused. Antonio's human heart was breaking to tell her how he had passed that night kneeling on the floor beside her bed. But he held his peace; and Isabel went on:

'In one point you did me immediate good. I put down my foot boldly, and insisted that we should leave Portugal at once. As soon as we landed in England I sent Mrs. Baxter away. But I grew more hard and bitter every day. At last, partly from distraction, partly out of prudence, I mastered enough of business to go through my own and my father's affairs. One evening I made a cruel discovery. It was only a matter of five hundred pounds; but it overwhelmed me. I found that this abbey had never been in any sense mine. From my father I found out his plan concerning the azulejos; and from old Mr. Crowberry I found that you knew how things stood all along. Then I remembered some of my words to you, and my frozen heart melted at the sudden knowledge of your chivalry. Even when I threatened to burn the abbey down you held your tongue.'

It puzzled Antonio that she should make so much of so little.

'Not chivalry,' he protested quietly. 'How else could I have behaved? Leave it. Come, tell me, Isabel, what first drew you to the religious life.'

'I am telling you as fast as I can,' she retorted, with all the old quickness and spirit. 'From that day I ceased to glower at the memory of you in sullen hate. I began to be almost impersonally interested in your conduct, your ideals, your character. The theme engrossed me all day long. I recalled everything you had told me of the years before we met. I lived again through every moment of the fortnight we were together. And it became plainer and plainer that I could only explain you in one way. You were too healthy, too clear-eyed, too much of a man to be a fanatic; yet you were breathing your every breath under the sway of a supernatural idea. Against my will I was forced to admit that the idea must be true.'

She paused again, weighing her words. Then she added:

'Of course, I knew that men have seemed to do wonderful things under the sway of ideas that are only delusions. Your idea was not a delusion. No man can get out of a delusion one atom more than he has put into it; but I saw that the idea—I mean, the supernatural reality—which dominated your cool brain was a reality from which you drew a mysterious something—a something quite beyond your own self, quite beyond your own nature. I had felt it, time after time, in your presence. It was not an illusion. It was there, indisputably there.

'What could this something be? I strove to square

it with a dozen theories in turn, and I gave it twenty names; but not one would fit. At last it occurred to me that, after all, your own account of it might be true. Antonio . . . you can hardly understand. In England faith is weak. There we have nearly all been taught the greater Christian verities; yet it smote me like a thunderbolt from heaven when I suddenly explained your life on the theory that the whole Christian gospel is truer than the stars. At the most I had believed that its truths had been realities in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago, and that the devout memory of them helped us and ennobled us to-day, like a stirring tale that is told. But, in one overwhelming revelation, I saw it as the eternal life of men. I can't find words. I saw it as something more vital than the air, something nearer to us than our own selves. I saw it as an unquenchable light, with the sun blinking in it like a farthing candle at noonday. And I saw your life, Antonio, reflecting that light and burning in the midst of it like a gem.'

He bent his head as if in pain; but she finished her speech.

'Yes, I understood your life at last,' she said very softly. 'It was the *vita abscondita cum Christo in Deo*, "the life that is hid with Christ in God."'

'God knows,' he rejoined solemnly, 'that I am not aping humility when I say that my life has been wilful and sinful and proud. Speak of such a life no more, I entreat. Speak of yourself. Tell me how you became a nun.'

'As soon as I had accounted for your life,' said Isabel, 'I was faced by a still harder riddle. How was I to account for my own life; and, especially, for the way

my life had become intertangled with yours? At the first glance I seemed to have been thrown across your path merely to try you. I seemed to be merely a single rung in your ladder to perfection. But, to be candid, I was not humble enough to rest satisfied with that. Surely I had some rôle of my own. To be simply another person's trial, another person's spring-board to heaven, was not enough for a whole life.

'Throughout one black week my new-found faith suffered an almost total eclipse. I rebelled in loathing against God for sacrificing me in the cause of your monkish perfection. Why should He have chosen me for so dreadful a work instead of some woman who had had her share of happiness? His cruelty seemed devilish.

'My doubts grew until they broke of their own weight. One day, soon after my poor father died, I had been bitterly recalling what seemed to be the cruellest fact of all—the fact that, for four years before I saw your face, I had lived in the supernatural persuasion that you were my destiny and that your life needed mine. Suddenly it flashed upon me that a man and a woman may be predestined to commingle their lives on some basis other than conventional love and marriage. I knew that my love for you was not such love as I saw among the lovers and the married people around me; and that from ordinary marriage I had always recoiled.

'It was on the strand of a beautiful English bay, with white cliffs running out miles into the blue water, that I worked out this new thought to the logical end. It was the eighth of July. At about eleven in the morning I held the key in my hand. Antonio, I did not love you

less; but my new faith rushed back a millionfold and I loved God so much more that at last I saw my love for you in its true light. I saw it as the means to an end. I saw that you had been sent to me, as Saint Philip was sent to the treasurer of Queen Candace, to make me a Christian. You, a monk, were raised up to make me a nun.

'I saw much more. I saw that, for years and years, I had been fighting for happy human relationships. I, for whom God's love had reserved this richer bliss, had cried out, year after year, for a father, a mother, a sister, a brother, a friend. My bitterest cry, Antonio, had been for you; but God knows that I had cried out for you less as a husband than as a comrade and a most dear friend. On that July morning I saw why our Lord had refused me the lower good to grant me the higher, and how He had sorely wounded me that His balm might more sweetly heal me.'

Isabel ceased. Her long speech had been growing less and less easy until she could not utter another word. The nun thought that the cause was in herself. Why had she not confined herself to reciting the precise words with which she had come prepared? Or why had she not taken the still better course of throwing all her preparation to the winds and of pouring out her heart to Antonio in whatever words might come? Why had she muddled fragments of a set speech with a nervous impromptu?

She did not know that the cause of her failure was in the listener. Although her story told Antonio that his dearest prayer had been superabundantly answered, the old wound in his heart was bleeding afresh. For half a moment, with an exquisite spiritual jealousy which was

beyond his will, he was jealous of his Lord. Throughout the long years of his growing love of God his chaste love of Isabel had never died; and he could not bear the thought that perhaps this love was no longer requited. He tried to speak; but his tongue was tied. Antonio's heart sank. What was this mystery? How was it that their accord was broken at the very moment when it should have been most perfect?

When the pause had become intolerable Isabel ended it. She began speaking quickly and nervously. The forced lightness of her tones contrasted almost painfully with her grave earnestness of a few minutes before.

'Your question is answered,' she said. 'I have told you how I became a nun. I did not rush into a convent, like a damsel of romance, out of chagrin at a disappointment in love. My disappointment, if we may use the word, was only the means of opening my eyes to a vocation as real as your own.'

Only! Antonio could see that their wonderful love had accomplished all she said. But was it only that, and nothing more? Again he strove to speak; again he failed; and again it was Isabel who ended the pause.

'For three or four months,' she said, in an even more matter-of-fact tone than before, 'I lived with Lady Julia Blighe. I entered the convent at Christmas. Probably you, a monk of Saint Benedict, can hardly take the convents of our Order seriously. Our chant is made easy, all on three notes. We have flowers in our rooms. Each nun has a silver spoon. I have always been a coward when it came to physical hardships.'

'I know your Order and I revere it,' protested Antonio, finding speech at last. 'You are not a coward.

The inward mortification is harder to practise than the outward. I know that the poor people used to call your nuns "the holy Maries." But tell me how you are employed.'

'I teach in the school,' she answered. 'That is why I am here to-day. Let me explain. We have had in our care three sisters from the Beira Alta, daughters of a Portuguese Marquis. Their education is finished. I brought them out to Oporto and handed them over to their parents last week. Before I left England I told our Mother Superior all about you, save your name, and it is with her consent that I have come here to-day. But I believed that your monks had been restored years and years ago. I expected to see you for half an hour in a monastery parlour. A sister of the Third Order of Saint Dominic is travelling with me, on her way to bring back some pupils from Lisbon. We reached your little town, Navares, last night. There we heard this news. The people could talk of nothing else.'

The hardness went out of her tone, and her voice faltered as she added softly: 'They told me, Antonio, that this would be your first Mass. They told me how you have fought and what you have suffered.'

The blue eyes which looked at him so wistfully as she spoke were the blue eyes which had brimmed with tears twenty years before when she had 'cried and cried and cried like a baby' at the sight of his worn-out cloak and had sobbed: 'Poor Antonio! You poor Antonio! My poor Antonio!' His heart broke at the sight. After twenty years she had come back. Amidst the old sights and sounds she was sitting hardly an arm's length from him. Isabel had come back But in less than one little hour they must stand up for the last

parting and he would never see her in this world any more. And meanwhile a frosty monster of false reserve was devouring their tiny store of golden moments one by one.

Antonio sprang to his feet.

'Isabel,' he said desperately, 'you think I didn't care. You think I never loved you. Listen. The night you went away I was ready to drop down with fatigue and hunger after riding and tramping from sunrise to sunset over the mountains. But how did I spend that dreadful night? I spent it in your chamber, kneeling on the floor against your bed, drinking deep of such anguish for you as I pray God you have never tasted for me. How did I spend the next day? Only by miracle upon miracle was I held back from thundering after you on the fleetest horse in the country-side. Hour after hour that day I tramped, tramped, tramped north, forgetting God and thinking only of you, till I came to a saint's grave.'

She rose hastily and raised one slender white hand, as if to ward off his burning words. But he would not be put to silence.

'Call me a sentimentalist, a madman, an apostate, anything you will,' he cried. 'But here is the sheer truth. Whenever I sat down to eat and drink at the farm you were there, invisibly but undeniably there, sitting at my right hand. Whenever I went into my cell I heard you searching in the cupboard for something you could not find. You haunted these woods all night and all day. To enter the guest-house was like being dragged into a chamber of torture. More. Believe me or not, as you will. To-day is the first time for twenty years that I have set foot on these stones,

or set eyes on yonder cascade, or touched this boulder with my hand. Isabel, in memory of you I have charged José to tend this place like a shrine; but I behold it now for the first time since I stood here, at sunrise, the day after you went away.'

His words burst from him like a stampede of eager, bright-eyed creatures suddenly released from long captivity. It was as though he would storm and batter down the gates of her heart and reclaim his ancient place. She recoiled from him.

'No more, no more!' she cried. 'I did not come for this. Antonio, in God's name, no more!'

'It is in God's name,' he retorted, 'that I must and will say more. Isabel, when you went away I did not know I loved you. I thought my grief was no more than an aching, bleeding wound of sympathy, of pity. But, little by little, I came to know that I loved you. Not with profane love. I came to believe that our Lord had vouchsafed to me a love such as unfallen man would have had for unfallen woman, and I believed that you, Isabel, loved me with as holy a love in return. It was not a love which weaned me from the love of God. It was a way of loving God more, and of loving Him more perfectly. I even learned to thank God for our separation; because I knew my human weakness and I knew how swiftly this love of you, which was also a love of God, might be changed into a deceitful love of self. But to-day what do I find? That your love for me was only a delusion, a phase, a stage, a means to another end—that, and that only.'

He strode up and down, as if he would shake from his shoulders this last and heaviest of his griefs. But when he reached the spot where he had pronounced his

final answer twenty years before he heard a step at his side and felt a light touch on his hand.

'No, Antonio,' she said. 'No. Not that and that only.'

He started violently. She was facing him, with downcast eyes and with the rose-pink of girlhood once more glowing in her cheeks. Her voice was low and sweet.

'Antonio,' she said very slowly, 'how strange it all is, and wonderful! You sent me away in autumn, when the sun made haste to set and the storm had torn the leaves from the trees. I have come back in the spring, amidst thousands of birds and millions of flowers. I have come back in the sunshine to find that you loved me even more than I loved you.'

Her voice died away so gently that Antonio could not be sure whether the headlong waterfall and the delirious birds had not robbed him of some sweet saying. At last she spoke again and said:

'Yes, Antonio, you loved me more than I loved you. But do not think that I loved you little or lightly. Above all, do not fear that my love is dead. Antonio, I will tell you what I had never meant to tell anybody in this world.'

He waited a long time before she began her confession. To help her he bent his gaze upon the ground. At last he heard her speaking, so softly that he had to strain his ears to listen.

'I, too,' she said, 'cherished such a love. But I am no theologian. Although my love of you had awakened my love of God, I thought it was wrong to go on cherishing it after its work was done. For years and years I thrust it away as a snare. I so crowded my

waking hours with prayer and labour and study that no time was left for other thoughts. But, time after time—not thrice, or ten times, but five hundred—my nights have been rosy with the same wonderful dream. In my dream I seem to have entered into the bliss of heaven, and to be moving in the fulness of the love of God as in a soft glory of life-giving golden light. At the beginning of my dream it is always a churchly heaven, pillared and domed, with holy chants drifting hither and thither like clouds of incense and with clouds of incense mounting upward like holy chants. But, little by little, it changes. The dim dome widens and brightens into a blue sky, with the smoke of the incense sailing in it like pearly clouds; and the stark pillars soften into tree trunks crowned with cool foliage and hung with clinging roses. Instead of rolling organs I hear the surf of a summer sea breaking on soft sand, and instead of the chants I hear the birds, and thousands of brooks ringing like little bells. Cool grass, gay with wild flowers, spreads itself in the place of golden streets and marble pavements. But, all the time, the same holy light is over it all, like the light before a summer sunset among green hills. Then I become conscious that the heaven I am walking in is not some strange unhomely land high above the stars. *Video cœlum novum et terram novam:* "I see a new heaven and a new earth," and I know, with sudden joy, that I am walking in this beautiful world, made new, purged of evil and pain, and wholly conformed to the mind of God.

My dream unfolds always in the same way. Gradually I see that the woods in which I am walking are woods I have walked in before. The voices of the sea

and the brooks are good to hear, because they are the voices of old friends. At last I push past a mimosa, on fire with golden flowers like a burning bush, and I halt on the margin of this pool. I wait, with the cascade rumbling at me like thunder and flashing at me like lightning. I turn round; and, without hearing your footfall, I find you at my side. Then we wander off together, sometimes down deep ravines, sometimes up through pines to brown moorlands purple with heather, sometimes along the banks of lakes and rivers, or along the sea-shore, with the holy light always over us and with God's love nearer to us than our own souls. That is my dream.'

After pausing a little, she added:

'At first I thought my dream was a snare. I say again that I am not a theologian. Still, I tried to puzzle out if such dreams were against sound doctrine. At first I feared they were. But I came to see that the words of our Lord, "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are married," referred to marrying of an earthly kind. Many another scripture came to my mind; and many another thought came to comfort me. Our Mother, the Blessed Virgin crowned in heaven—is she not a woman still? And do we not think of this saint or of that as still a man or still a woman, as the case may be? Is the life hereafter to be a blank Nirvana? Will it be less richly personal than the life we are living now? But these are only my own poor thoughts, worth less than nothing. I rest rather in two great scriptures. *In domo Patris mei mansiones multæ sunt:* "In my Father's house are many mansions." And again, "Eye hath not seen, nor hath the ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of

man what things God hath prepared for those who love Him." But let me be plain to the end. My dreams are beyond my control; and, when I am awake, I do not willingly dwell on these thoughts.'

The big bell of the monastery, vocal once more after seven-and-twenty years of silence, struck twelve. The monk and the nun listened to the strokes without speaking. Before the last echoes died away Brother Cypriano rang the Angelus.

'*Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ*,' said Antonio, with bowed head. And Isabel responded:

'*Et concepit de Spiritu sancto.*'

When the pious exercise was finished she said:

'It is time to go.'

'No,' cried Antonio, suddenly perceiving that she had picked up her cloak and mantilla. 'You must not go.'

'I must go,' she said, smiling gently. 'Antonio, things are changed indeed. In the old days your great aim was to drive me away.'

'You must not go,' he said, with the utmost energy. 'The Duchess of Ribeira Grande is at the guest-house, with servants. There is room for you and for your friend the Dominican sister. You need rest, until to-morrow. You must not go.'

She shook her head, still smiling gently, and held out her hand.

'Good-bye, Antonio,' she said.

He took the hand; but instead of grasping it and letting it fall he held it, and said once more:

'Until to-morrow you must not go.'

She began to disengage her fingers. Antonio gripped them fiercely and pleaded not only with his voice, but with his eyes.

'Isabel,' he said, 'one room at the guest-house is still yours. It can be made ready for you and for your friend to-night. It is your old room, with the white roses. I have suffered no one to enter it for twenty years.'

This time she left her hand in his. The monk's voice, his brown velvet eyes, his clasp, and the rush of old memories were too much for her. She trembled a little; and suddenly a rain of tears fell upon Antonio's hand.

'Antonio,' she sobbed, 'I must go. Now. Don't ask me again. But, before I go, there is one thing more to tell you.'

For many moments her weeping would not let her speak. At last she whispered between her sobs:

'That little bowl. The bowl you gave me, with the blue-and-orange bird. Do not despise me. When the time came, I felt I could give up the whole world . . . except that. For two months I turned a deaf ear to God, all because I couldn't give up . . . that.'

The exceeding bitterness of the memory made her sob afresh. When she could speak again, she said:

'Antonio, I will tell you where the little bowl is to-day. It has been made into a lamp. I had it encased in brass, so that it cannot break, and plated over with the purest silver. It hangs in a little church, in a slum near the London docks. It burns before the image of Saint Antonio.'

Antonio could not speak. He forgot that he was still holding her hand, and she did not remember that she had not taken it away. After a long time she murmured, almost inaudibly:

'Antonio . . . one night I gave you a rose.'

He released her white fingers. Then he drew forth

his breviary and placed it in her hand. She took it wonderingly; but he averted his eyes. Isabel gazed at the worn volume. She could see that there was some kind of a book-marker, marking the Office of the day. She opened the book and saw a pressed white rose, flecked and veined with faint blood-red.

She looked at it a long, long while. Then she shut the book and gave it back to Antonio. Without another word he wrapped the thin wrap about her form and helped her to arrange the mantilla on her shoulders. When the moment of parting came she simply gave him her hand, like a proud English lady; and he, like a courtly Portuguese gentleman, bent over it and lightly kissed her finger-tips.

She went away by the path she had taken on their last afternoon, twenty years before. Antonio, strangely calm, watched her as she pressed up the steep way. He was conscious that she still walked with willowy, girlish grace. He remembered how he had watched her that other afternoon, and how he had wondered if she would turn round and look back.

The two cypresses hid her from his sight. He breathed a quiet prayer for herself and for him. But he did not close his eyes; for they were fixed on the one point where she would reappear. His being was filled full with such peace and bliss as he had never known.

She reappeared. She turned round. She waved her hand. She was gone.

As soon as Antonio re-entered the porch of the monastery the Fathers thronged forward pressing him to break his long fast. But he shook his head and trudged on, looking neither to the right hand nor to

the left. In the cool cloister he paused a moment upon the slab which covered the body of Sebastian. Then he turned into the narrow doorway and climbed, with dragging steps, to his old seat on the flat roof. One of the younger monks tried to follow; but José and Cypriano barred his passage. The two sturdy fellows, eyeing one another jealously, stood guard on either side of the gloomy opening, like two genii keeping the door of a cave.

Antonio sat down on the bench of cork. At the same moment a carriage rolled out through the principal gate of the abbey. He knew that it was bearing Isabel to rejoin her friend at Navares. Down the dusty hill it went; past the farm; and onwards until it was no more than a tremulous black spot against the whiteness of the road. As it approached the pine-woods some plate of burnished brass in the harness caught the light and blazed at Antonio for a moment, like a tiny sun. Then the shadow engulfed it, and he saw it no more.

Very calmly and with perfect concentration of mind Antonio resumed his devout thanksgiving for his first Mass. God had enabled him to rebuild His broken altar and to offer upon it the Holy Sacrifice. In the dazzling refulgence of that immense grace his sufferings and hardships were no more than grains of dust dancing in a sunbeam. The chief events of his past reenacted themselves before him, like a stage show, and he saw that his life had been an unbroken pageant of divine mercy, full of glittering lights and of rich shadows. He recalled all that God had done in him, and *vidit quod esset bonum*: 'he saw that it was good.'

When the monk's thanksgiving was finished Isabel reclaimed his mind. The strange peace which had descended upon them both, as she gazed at their white rose, abode with him still. There was no rebellion in his soul, no ache in his heart. The whole history of their love unrolled its bright length before him, like a holy scroll illuminated in blue and blood-red and gold, and he found nothing written therein that he would have altered or erased. *Vidit quod esset bonum.* It was good, all good, to the end.

He sat and pondered upon their wonderful love. At first he was confident that Isabel and he, he and Isabel, were the lovers of lovers, the supreme lovers of all time. But humility brought him a larger thought. Surely, before Isabel and he were born, there had been men and women loving as purely and as grandly. And surely there would be men and women loving as grandly and as purely after he and Isabel were dead.

Compared with all this love of all these lovers in all the past and all the present, surely the shining of the sun was as darkness. He closed his eyes that he might behold the greater light. And, in that surpassing radiance, he seemed to be reading the deepest secrets of eternity and to be solving the riddle at the inmost heart of the universe. He saw innumerable loves ever ascending, like golden mists, out of the love of God. He saw those innumerable loves returning into the love of God again, like rivers into the sea. And with every return of love he saw the love of God growing richer and sweeter, like a fruit ripening in the sun. It seemed as if even God Himself were waxing greater and as if, in the act of creation, the Creator took as well as gave. Without creation God must still have been perfect; but

even God could rise from the lower perfection to the higher. Without creation the eternal Word was like a trumpet blown on an illimitable plain: but, with creation, the Word was like that same trumpet resounding and reverberating amidst re-echoing hills. God had need of man. God was Love, a pure white ray of love, and humanity was a prism turning this way and that and breaking the whiteness into the fairest colours. All love was one. Antonio's love for Isabel, Isabel's love for Antonio, was a drop flung forth from the bottomless ocean of the love of God to shine like a gem in the sunlight.

No. Not like a mere grain of spray which leapt free and sparkled for a moment and then fell back to lose its identity for ever. Rather was it like the immortal soul of a new-born babe, a something suddenly existing, a something with no past but with an everlasting future, a something with an eternal identity which even God Himself could not destroy. God would no more revoke and destroy His emanations of love than He would revoke and destroy His emanations of being. Innumerable loves would chime for ever in noblest harmony with the love of God, like brooks murmuring with the sea—*vox turbæ magnæ, vox aquarum multarum et vox tonitruorum magnorum:* 'a voice of a great multitude, a voice of great waters, a voice of mighty thunderings.'

The monk rested awhile in this thought. He knew it was the thought of Isabel's dream. But suddenly a white light blazed in his soul. Isabel vanished as if she had never been. All the human love he had been cherishing fell from him, like a dying torch from the grasp of a man who strides forth out of a cave into the

blinding light of a summer noon. Antonio was caught up into an ecstasy of the pure love of God.

When he opened his eyes at last and gazed upon the Atlantic he knew that he was weary. The hands were weary that had laboured so roughly for his Lord. The feet were weary that had tramped so many a league in dust and heat; and the brain was weary that had puzzled and worried and planned till it could puzzle and worry and plan no more. But it mattered not at all. Was not the day's work done? There was plenty of time to sleep. Ranging over wood and meadow and stream, Antonio's gaze came to rest in the little clearing between the ending of the orange-groves and the beginning of the vineyards; and he looked with longing at the white cross which rose tall and slender above the monks' graves.

Peace filled earth and heaven. His tired eye-lids drooped over Antonio's eyes. The airs around him were rich with scents of lemon-blossom and honeysuckle. The Atlantic lay unvexed by wind; and the ocean swell, as it searched the creeks and caves, hummed no loudlier than a heavy-laden honey-bee lumbering home.

THE END

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